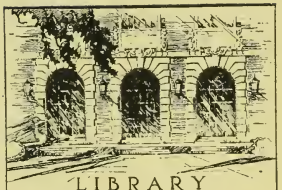

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
W572m
v.3

MEADOW SWEET

OR

THE WOOING OF IPHIS

A PASTORAL

BY

EDWIN WHELPTON

AUTHOR OF 'A LINCOLNSHIRE HEROINE' ETC.

'A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse;
Straight, but as lissom as a hazel wand.'
TENNYSON

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1884

[*All rights reserved*]

823
W572mc
v. 3

CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

CHAP.		PAGE
29.	A TIFF	1
30.	AULD ROBIN GRAY	20
31.	FORSAKEN	52
32.	FOOTPRINTS	75
33.	INTO THE DARKNESS	90
34.	A QUIET WEDDING	117
35.	A DEATH	132
36.	YET TO SPEAK	154
37.	FATHER AND DAUGHTER	162
38.	THE DEAD MAN'S VOICE	180
39.	CLOUDS	192
40.	GODFATHERS	205
41.	A CONTRETEMPS	217
42.	AN EXPLOSION	234
43.	STRUCK DOWN	249
44.	IN EXTREMIS	271
45.	A VERDICT	294
46.	TO LEAD A NEW LIFE	311

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/meadowsweetorwoo03whel

MEADOW SWEET.

CHAPTER 29.

A TIFF.

But Iphis Cowlamb had reckoned without her host. Before she was well out of the town she heard feet behind her, some one evidently in pursuit of her. She had no need to turn ; her own thoughts told her who it must be. She did turn, however, and saw Ephraim Sparrow. Her indignation was great. She quickened her pace. Her ears were acute. She would have been deaf had it been in her power. She heard him shout with most outrageous audacity—

'Iphis!'

And in a tone of remonstrance-

'Well'—— she cried, throwing her words at him; 'you can drop following me.'

'Why, what for?' he asked, his eyes opening wide.

Iphis could have felled him for his hypocrisy, for such it seemed to her. Her anger was so great she did not pause to give him the benefit of a doubt.

'What for?' echoed she, indignantly, coming to a standstill. 'What for? Why, you know well enough.'

Oh, Iphis, unlearned in the axiom that the woman who parleys yields a fortress.

'I'm suer,' asseverated Ephraim, 'I don't know what I done amiss. Tell us, Iphis,' pleaded he.

'Law,' he added, tenderly, but with a suspicion of 'fauseness' (subtleness), 'you mun ha' been strange and bad.'

To learn that Ephraim was shocked at the change in her was almost more than she could bear. She was convinced that Ephraim had gone after idols.

'Heigh, you may well say that. You like 'em wi' rosy cheeks. I know that.'

'Law, I don't know what you mean, Iphis,' declared Ephraim, excitedly, invoking the heaviest punishment that could be inflicted on the untruthful, if he was not all at sea.

'Tell us what you mean, Iphis.'

'What was you doing with our Damaris? I seed you.'

Ephraim started. Iphis took it as a sure sign of guilt.

'You looked very sweet, that you did,' continued Iphis, scathingly. 'Well, Ephraim, we part as we found one another, an' we needn't be no worse friends. You're quite welcome to Damaris — I'm going to be married.'

'Going to be married?' gasped Ephraim, forgetting now that he had his character to clear.

'Yis—to a man wi' lots o' money; an' I am to have a pony carriage, and do exactly as I like.'

You'll have a fine time,' said Ephraim, bitterly.

'How do you know?' retorted she, sharply. 'You know nothing about it.'

'I know plenty—enough for me,' muttered Ephraim, hoarsely. Somehow this very thickness of utterance seemed to move her.

'Why, it weant matter much to you, Ephraim, will it?' inquired she, speculatively.

'Weant it? I think I shall go an' drown'd mysen.'

'Drown yoursen?' now gasped Iphis.

'I spok plain, didn't ee. Your faither nearly did it once. I wish now he had.'

'Well, but there's Damaris!'

'What's Damaris got to do wi' it?' he muttered, impatiently.

'Why, you took her in the show, Ephraim?'

'I know that.'

'What did ye for?'

'Because she belonged to you.'

Iphis shook her head incredulously.

'It's true,' said Ephraim. 'She ast me for a statussin'. I wanted to ast her about you. I didn't know you'd be there.'

'The impudent hussy!' exclaimed Iphis. 'I'll tell mother.'

'You'd better not,' counselled Ephraim, his expression grim. 'Your mother 'ud tell your faither, an' your faither would get to knaw you'd been talkin' agean to me. An' he likes me,' said Ephraim, sarcastically.

'No, he doesn't like you, Ephraim,' said she, with a determined regard for truth, 'an' it's a wonder anybody does (a woman's tear lurking in her eye), as you go on doin' such aggravating things.'

'Aggravatin'—oh, well, what d'ye call your ways. Who's this chap you're goin' to marry?'

'He's not a chap.'

'Man, then. Is he owder than me?'

'A dele owder than you, Mister Ephraim Sparrow.'

'Oh—much owder?'

'A good dele.'

'Owd enough to be your faither, I'se think,' surmised Ephraim, sarcastically.

'Yis, an' yours.'

'Well, the difference betwixt us isn't worth falling out about,' observed Ephraim, sardonically. 'Some owd money bags your faither's hunted up agean. I wish he was dead now.'

'He can't last long,' mused Iphis, unconsciously, following her parent's argument.

'He can't?' cried Ephraim. He could not help feeling some disgust at such calculation in her. 'Why, he isn't ninety?'

'No,' deprecated Iphis; 'he's not ninety.'

'Owder than your faither, though.'

'A dele,' said Iphis, calmly. 'But he reckons he isn't.'

Ephraim considered a long time, then brightened. 'Why, it isn't owd Long? He's owd enough to lay out o' doors.'

'Yes, it is Mr. Long,' returned she candidly and with dignity.

Now, Ephraim as runaway had seen Mr. Long in the flesh. But he had forgotten for the moment Iphis's confidences at Snailhorn. With him matters were often in at one ear and out at the other. It all recurred to him again. From others he had had the old gentleman's character, attainments, and past achievements painted in colours gay and dusky. The picture of this old reprobate aspiring to Iphis had at the time excited his indignation; now it was the antithesis. He doubled up and shouted in derision—

'Oh, owd Long—ee!' then doubled up again, and went off into shouts of laughter.

Oh, how troubled Iphis felt!

When he had laughed until he could laugh no longer, Iphis spoke; tears were in her eyes.

'If I had a-known, I wouldn't ha teld ye.'

She was affronted as well as humiliated.

'You'll niver ha' that owd creatur,' ex-

postulated he, moderating his mood, feeling that he was only wounding her and not serving himself; 'afore ya shall I'll go an' squeeze his gizzand.'

'You'll see if I don't,' said Iphis, exultant, feeling that she had the whip-hand again; 'and as for such talk as that it's more than you dare do. You dursn't.'

'Dursn't ee?' nodded Ephraim, with such a resolute look in his face Iphis trembled. But her tremor had an access of joyfulness in it.

'Maybe faither 'll bring him home with him,' mused she, simulating abstraction.

'All the better. If I light on him I'll scar him out on his seven senses, see if I don't. He's been an owd heathen, and he must begin to think o' judgment day. Iphis,' said Ephraim, with grave emphasis, 'd'ye know what an owd rip he is?'

'He does swear a bit,' admitted Iphis; 'but he's gittin' hissen off on it. He's not going to swear any more after——'

'Nay, finish it,' said Ephraim, caustically.

'After we're married,' said Iphis, boldly.

'Bah! Well, marry him, then; that's all I have to say—marry him. Law, ye will be a fine lady. I'll say good mornin' to ye.'

'Good morning, Mr. Sparrow.'

Ephraim turned on his heel, but Iphis stood still, and yet Ephraim did not seem to get away. He looked round and saw Iphis still standing there. He was irresolute; he could not tell whether she was relenting, or was still cruel. He did manage to drag his feet a few paces away; then he heard her voice—

'Ephraim!'

He felt that he had responded too quickly. He ought to have shown himself a little more inflexible, while Iphis had begun to think that she had shown herself a trifle too obdurate.

'Are you going—home?' asked Iphis, feeling it incumbent upon her to show some grounds for arresting him.

'I'd knaw,' answered Ephraim. It was difficult for him to declare what his mind was. Of course he was going in the direction of Willowby, if he could consider his home was in that village. There was no telling what might cross his mind or how he might be influenced when he got there.

'Here, come here,' invited Iphis.

Ephraim obeyed, his hands in his pockets, trying to look unconcerned and collected.

'I shouldn't like to hear tell o' you happenin' owt,' said Iphis, considerately.

'I shouldn't like to hear talk o' ye marrying that owd creatur,' returned Ephraim, profoundly. 'What does the owd beggar want wi' young a lass?'

'What does a young fellow want wi' a young lass?'

Iphis was tickled with the dogged gloom on Ephraim's countenance. With difficulty she restrained a disposition to laugh. Blind oaf of a lover, he could not see that the corners of her mouth were twitching, nor the

dimples deepening that still remained, nor the eyes full of tenderness and entreaty.

'An' if I was to say I wodn't ha' owd Long—ee, at no price ?'

'I'd marry you straight off if you'd ha' me. Run away agean.'

Iphis shook her head. 'I dursn't,' said she, 'father ud niver forgie me, niver.'

'I niver shall ha' thee, then,' said Ephraim, settling into deep gloom again.

'You couldn't wait, Ephraim ? Men are so impatient !'

'Wait ? I should ha' to wait. It's owd Long now. There'd be some other fellow if you got shut on him, an' maybe a young fellow wi' money jingling in his pocket an' a farm at his back. How many has there been already ? Owd Long and that young preacher I do knaw about ; maybe there's been lots I niver heerd on. Lasses 'll hev any sort of a kilps if he's got a farm. Your faither 'll niver come to—to look at the likes o' me. I s'll go to America—somewhere a long way

off, where I shan't ha' money enough to bring me back if I turn homesick an' wants to come. I s'll go to my owd uncle's an' ast him to help me off as soon as I've sarved my time.'

'D'ye really mean it, Ephraim?'

He simply nodded.

'Don't go, Ephraim——'

Ephraim looked at her a moment. What tempted him?—Heaven knows; his arms went around her, and he did not know how it came about, but when he recovered his sanity he found her arms were around his neck, and he believed he had kissed every inch of her face and some portions of her neck as well.

'I won't,' declared he, passionately. 'He may shoot at me again if he likes; I don't care. What do I care what they do? You needn't be a bit jealous o' me. There's nobody else i' th' wide world I care about but thou. Thou ought to know that. But what's to be done?'

'I don't know,' said Iphis, sickening hopelessness following passionate surrender.

'It'll ha' to come to what I said——'

'What?'

'Thou an' me 'll ha' to run away, that's all. That's th' long an' th' short on it; there's no other way that I can see.'

'I don't think I durst do it,' said Iphis, fearfully, though not a little taken with the idea now.

'Pshoo, it's like a nowt when you git used to it,' said Ephraim, as if it was a common practice of his persuading damsels to elope with him. 'They couldn't unmarry us agean. When your faither got his madness ower he'd be glad to hev us—you, back. But I could addle a living,' declared Ephraim boldly and bravely, qualifying it duly; 'maybe things wodn't be so smart as what you'd been used to, leastways not at first.'

'But you wouldn't do it just now?'

'No. I've nobbut a week or two, then I'm free as air. Bud I s'll see thee agean afore very long.'

'I shall go to chapel twice every Sunday. But father 'll allus be there.'

'I could scribble i' thy hymn book, only happen he'd git hold on it. Bud I'll contrive an' see thee somehow, if I git my head knocked off for my pains.'

'You moant let father see you.'

'No,' said Ephraim, assuming great astuteness; 'I'll watch *him*.'

'Well'—Iphis started—'there's a trap coming. The horse trots just like ours. It is a grey horse. If it should be father? Get ower the hedge, Ephraim, and lay down.'

The field was sown, the corn up, a Cambridge roll had been over it, wide bands alternating, emerald and a duller green, the mark of the outgoing and returning roll.

She waited with no little excitement. Her ear seldom deceived her; she knew their own horse's foot too well. There *were* two in the trap. One was her father. Who was the other? It looked like a woman. Was it Sam's wife her father was bringing home?

What a commotion it would make! Her mother would be vexed at having to entertain such a body without having received due notice. But no young woman, not Sam's wife, would sit such a bundle. It was a man. Iphis, with the sense of coming disaster, was now possessed with a terror and despair that almost stopped her heart beating.

'Ephraim,' she cried under her breath, 'I don't think I durst run away.'

She felt that she ought not to have spoken. If Ephraim heard her he might reply; if he had heard her imperfectly he might rise inconsiderately to ask her what she had said. Happily, Ephraim remained quiescent, and there was no catastrophe. She would not look round—no, not with the trap close upon her; she would walk on slowly; it was something to defer evil tidings, an unwelcome surprise. If it was all a mad adventure of her brain—well, it would be a greater relief to her to find it so.

The grey broke out of its trot; it was

uphill, and Farmer Cowlamb was lenient with horse-flesh. Then she heard her father's voice in surprised tones, but not unkind. 'What, Iphis ?—ah, you couldn't keep away from the stattus, then ?'

Iphis looked round slowly, deferring to the last the moment when it would prove her fears real or groundless.

Ah, whose voice was this squeaking now. 'Now, lovey, thou looks thin ; how art tha ? D—— it, Cowlamb would ha' me come.'

She felt herself uncanny. When she had said to Ephraim, probably Mr. Long would accompany her father home, it was not to say that she had thought it likely. How terribly her hap-hazard assertion had returned upon her! Ephraim behind the hedge, no doubt he would be peeping through and see Mr. Long, and Ephraim knew the old man by sight. But her thoughts were checked hearing her ancient lover's voice again. And her father, considerately working to make the course smooth, would not allow the mare to

get into her trot again. He wished to give Mr. Long every opportunity of addressing his daughter.

'I hadn't been out o' weeks,' soliloquised Mr. Long, 'but I wanted to go to Haveluck market. I had the old nag yoked in the gig —I was tender as a chicken, so I was hardenin' mysen—Cowlamb, you don't think I shall take any payment, eh?' inquired Mr. Long, querulously.

Iphis was again revolving in her mind her mother's mood, such a visitor coming unawares. Iphis felt that she ought to have hastened on and given her mother notice. The fire would have to be lighted in the best room, there would be the best bed-room to get ready, sheets to air, and the mattress and bed to bring down to the kitchen fire.

What an object the old man looked as he was helped out of the trap! Over his ears was the tippet of sealskin, his head surmounted with a rakish but antique hat.

Mrs. Cowlamb welcomed Mr. Long most

dolorously. She was sure that he had caught them at their worst. With Iphis being ill, things had had to go. Had she known Mr. Long was coming she would have had things straighter. She knew he came from a house where every thing was 'point 'vice.'

All of which Mr. Long tried to meet with credence to pacify her. But as she still rambled on, affording him no hope of a speedy conclusion, he burst out tartly, intending to be jocose—

'Why d—— it, mem, I should think you've got a drop o' gin in the house.'

'Maister,' cried Mrs. Cowlamb in plaintive staccato, 'maister,' repeated she with some impatience, 'that gallon o' gin has never been opened, and I couldn't ast Mr. Long to hev a glass.'

'Nay, nay, nay; I want no gin'—an asseveration Mr. Long evidently wished no one to take as the echo of his heart.

'Iphis, get a glass and some water; do, see,' cried Mrs. Cowlamb, utterly ignoring her

visitor's repudiation of motive in speaking as he did.

Iphis obeyed ; but she was plunged into a reverie. How calmly she could contemplate a possible future, wherein her sole occupation would be ministering to the craving of an old wretch who, dreading death, kept himself alive with a stimulant, chuckling that even when death stole a march upon him he should leave a legacy of hate behind him.

CHAPTER 30.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

Mr. Long evidently meant business. Mrs. Cowlamb, surmising that no fool's errand had brought him to Willowby, filled up the decanter out of the gallon jug, and the inroad Mr. Long made into it was something surprising. Iphis went about the house as if in a dream. The old man refused to go into the best room, suspicious, no doubt, of its real warmth and cosiness. He had a chair pulled up on the warmest side of the fireplace ; his stick rested against the mantelpiece, and his splaited feet were not far from the fender. The impression seemed to be with Iphis that Mr. Long had only dropped into his proper place ; he might have occupied the chair for half a century.

'Cowlamb,' said Mr. Long, complacently, 'I'm comfortable. I don't believe I shall ail owt. That nephy, or what ye call him, o' mine was past t'other day. He niver so much as looked at the house—I watched him, d—— him. It's an owd tale o' the owd woman that had all her nephies and nieces around her. Says she, "I'm the root and you're the branches." One of her nephies started a-laughing. "What art ee laughing at, lad?" says she, and he was forced to tell her. So says he, "Why, if the root was underground, how the branches would flourish." I should think, Cowlamb, that parson thinks he'll hev a fine flourish when I'm underground. Will he?' Mr. Long's eyes gleamed like a cat's. 'Eh, Cowlamb, what do you say? I reckon he weant flourish wi' my money. I shall leave it all to I know who. And that owd devil shan't have none on it. I believe, Cowlamb, the owd figure thought at one time that I should marry *her*.'

'Who, Miss Grinstead?' inquired Mrs. Cowlamb, raising her eyebrows dolefully.

'The very same, mem. An owd thing, all of a shak. Cowlamb, you'll take me back again. You'll do as you said. I want to be at Haveluck. I've some money out there, and they ain't paid no interest of I don't know how long, and I can't afford it, I should soon be ruined. I been once ; somebody went wi' me. I can't remember his name—— What do they call him? D—— it, I'm like the lad with his letters ; he knew 'em by sight, but couldn't think o' their names.' And the eyes of his nephew the parson came in for some language in the 'index,' Mrs. Cowlamb lifting up her eyes so sanctimoniously, old Long, who was quicksighted, deemed it a hint that his suit would not be furthered unless he curbed his tongue a little.

'Heigh, heigh, it would make onybody swear, the ungrateful devil. Tut, tut——, one gits into a habit, and habits are bad to get shut on. Don't you think so, Mrs. Cowlamb?'

'Yes, sir, they are,' agreed Mrs. Cowlamb

in perfect good faith, for her mind went to the petty sins of Damaris. 'I have nothing to do but look at door edges. The slut, she always clams hold with her dirty fingers. Nobody larnt her that, I do know; it's a habit she's got hold on.'

'We all have faults,' said Mr. Long, philosophically, attempting a pious, forgiving, long-suffering expression.

'We have,' replied Mrs. Cowlamb; 'but she'll go an' clean a grate, and then ha' no more sense than to stick her fingers on a door, if I nobbut washed it five minutes afore. If Miss Grinstead has such a creatur I'd knaw how she gits on.'

'Miss Grinstead—she seems to do nowt; she weant so much as retch me my glass unless I ask her. But I shall be out of her. I shall say to her—"Now, then, pack," as soon as iver I can do without her. The owd thing thowt she was going to take me to church, he! he! he!'

'Heigh, Mr. Long, you will have your

joke,' said Farmer Cowlamb, taking his chair. He had been over the farm since he got home. 'Well, I may as well have a pipe o' bacca.'

'You needn't git no pipes now,' declared Mrs. Cowlamb, tartly; 'tea 'll be ready in a minute or two. It is all set out, an' the kettle sings.'

'I thought you was busy,' said Mr. Long, facetious and complimentary; 'but women allus are.'

'"Heigh, I'm busy," said the owd woman; the owd woman was busy, I reckon, when she was burning fir-busks under the kettle to make it boil.' Cowlamb laughed at his own joke.

'Mr. Long wodn't go into the room. He wod sit here, and Iphis was in sich a way. It's sich a hole-and-corner place to sit in, this.'

'I been comfortable, and that's anew,' said Mr. Long; 'I ain't so much heat in me as I used to hev.'

'An' I lit sich a beautiful fire.'

'Well, but Mr. Long was reight,' said Cowlamb, growing weary of his wife's perpetual discontent. 'How long is it since that room hed a fire in it?' demanded he, severely.

'Why, you know, when Iphis was brought home we'd fires in it every day.'

'How long is that since—months?'

'Nay—'

'Now, I say, d—— it, no squabblin,' appealed Mr. Long. 'When I git married I s'll make a bargain to have no falling out. We s'll give in, one one week, t'other next.'

He looked towards Iphis graciously, but it was wasted condescension. Iphis walked about, in and out, busying herself about household matters, but without interest or much energy. She never laughed at old Long's sallies, nor yet at her father's. She could scarcely comprehend how her father could be cheerful. He had in a way been to see Sam's chattels disposed of. She would have thought that would have opened out all the old sorrow and the grief. But it came to

her afterwards that her father's cheerfulness was a force-put. He wished her to marry, and to marry well. He had succeeded in reconciling his conscience with his worldliness. All heart-slain feeling must be deferred *sine die.* Mr. Long continued amusing himself with his fund of wicked witticisms, interlarding his loquacity with oaths now and then, which he sought to be shrived of in the same breath. His relative recurred to him many times, and he appealed to Cowlamb if that was not sufficient excuse for a man forgetting himself. Once or twice he displayed a tendency to stray into stories which made Cowlamb uneasy, and caused Mrs. Cowlamb to glance furtively at Iphis. But Iphis seemed to hear without comprehending. It was the phantasmagoria of an evil dream. Only, once or twice Iphis going behind the old man, was recalled to herself. She set her teeth ; one tap from a knuckle-duster on the shiny, bald pate would settle the wicked old rascal for ever.

After tea—Mrs. Cowlamb would have tea

in the best room—Mr. Long dragged his chair near the black marble chimneypiece, and looked uneasily around. His fidgeting was quickly interpreted. A glass of gin on the shelf restored his mental equilibrium. There he sat, silent at last, basking before the fire, his eyes riveted upon the glowing coals. To Iphis there was something demoniacal in Mr. Long's abstractions. Farmer Cowlamb would not disturb him—no doubt he was thankful for the break. While his wife and Damaris, the maid, cleared the table the farmer occupied himself with filling his pipe. Cowlamb was no great smoker, but this night the tobacco was balm to him. The puffs of white smoke curled and floated upwards, suggesting to him a successful issue.

Iphis, rising to assist her mother, thus hoping to gain a short respite, was intercepted with a look from her father. But she sat as far away from her 'Robin' as she could get, and as much in the shadow. Where was young Jamie? But Iphis had no knowledge

of 'Auld Robin Gray,' and her Jamie was almost within call. She heard, though too well, her father's voice.

'Damaris can help. I don't pay onybody to sit wi' their hands across—two stomachs to eat an' one for work.' It was all in an undertone, and Mr. Long continued his basilisk glance on the glowing coals.

Mrs. Cowlamb, not an adept yet in tact, rose violently in opposition.

'She shan't touch my china. There's one cup cracked. If she didn't do it, t'other afore her did.'

Damaris was regarded with much severity afterwards by her mistress. It was unction to Mrs. Cowlamb to rest assured that nothing had gone wrong because she had done it herself. But Mrs. Cowlamb's voice always lost its acerbity in the no-man's land, the passage between the best kitchen and the best room.

At last Mr. Long roused himself and spoke. There was scarcely any end to him when he did begin; but although Iphis knew well

enough that his language related to his possessions, it was nearly all Greek to her. Here and there she caught allusion to money out at use, instances where he had foreclosed mortgages, interest he had in certain farming ventures, banks, companies; and he expressed himself determined that his journey to Haveluck should furnish him with a balance-sheet. He would, for his own satisfaction, have a near approximation of his wealth. The old man, prolix in his confidences, seemed especially anxious to make a clean breast of his affairs to Cowlamb, and the warmer he got the lower his glass sank, to be replenished over and over again. Iphis knew that his talk was directed to her too. The old man wished her to comprehend the situation, the advantages she would have, the comfort there would be in having a husband who had a house well garnished to begin with, and money to give her to throw broadcast. He implied as much. This was better than marrying a beginner, who, if everything did not go smooth, would

turn upon her with sour words and 'clunch' looks. Iphis at one time would have been glamoured, for she had no little of her parents' worldliness, but she had heard such frightful stories of the old man—out of his own mouth came the incident of the servant girl. But for all this she would have thought less of his disclosures anent some rather sharp practices of his upon needy folk. Now, she regarded him in the worst light, his mouth closing after each reminiscence of his adroitness with the relentlessness of a rat-trap. She knew what must come shortly. Mr. Long would wish for her answer. He had come for that. She would have her father there, too, to overawe her, threaten her with his displeasure, revive the story of his poor mother's charing days, or strive to make her miserable in some other way. What could she do? Ephraim was in bonds yet, although of age. For a moment her heart jumped—Mr. Gerlimore. The good old parson had told her that she was to look to him

if she were ever in trouble. But, then, how was she to seek his aid ? She might write to him—but, then, the old man must think that under a parent's roof she could need no help or succour. She felt that she could not arraign her own father. Then she recollected the way of escape suggested by Mr. Gerlimore. Well, she might do worse than that ; he was a gentleman, his offer of marriage had come in so different a strain to what she might expect from this old heathen. Mr. Gerlimore was not innocent of oaths, but there was not in them such a horrible tincture of profanity ; there were queer tales about him too, but then every one laughed, while one's flesh crept when Mr. Long's past was raked up. She sat now completely oblivious of what was passing or what was being said. A new thought was reviving hope. If Ephraim and she ran away together would Mr. Gerlimore marry them ! Would he dare do it ? Mr. Gerlimore had made her a promise, and she believed that the old

parson had the courage to adhere to his word, in the face of all authority, if he saw that he was defeating an injustice and a parent's hardihood.

Iphis was in complete ignorance of the formalities of the Marriage Act. She had a hazy notion that people could not marry without some preliminaries. She knew that there were askings in church—essentially a slow process. She had a faint idea that there was a quicker way involving considerable outlay ; but of the steps one or other would have to take she had no more notion than the man in the moon. She was in a fright at three weeks, and her name and Ephraim's proclaimed to the world. Wherever she got her father would be sure to find her ; that was one way of informing him, some unexpected eavesdropper would carry the news to him. Wherever you go there you find some one sure to know something about you. He would fetch her and drag her back home ; and having everything ready, Mr. Long, too,

at hand, marry her to his own liking. And so near to be trapped, was worse than consenting now and marrying the old man with her eyes wide open.

'Iphis,' she heard her father say, 'did ye hear what Mr. Long said?'

'No—o,' returned Iphis, faintly.

'Speak up, lass,' said her father, encouragingly. 'I'm sure no man could speak no fairer.'

'Why, you tell her, Cowlamb,' splut tered Mr. Long, bashfully.

'Well, I hadn't ashamed to repeat what' been said—Iphis, Mr. Long thinks he's giting over owd to ha' this weddin' put off—d'ye hear me—we can't help poor Sam being took so lately,' said the farmer, with a pang, and looking somewhat less exhilarated; 'and he thinks a month or three weeks even. Bud if ta likes it can be done quicker. He'll ha' the house titivated up a bit, an' he'll make his will, an' do things handsome for thee. If ye nobbut understand all these things what

Long's been telling me why you'd think you was well off an' no mistake. I'd no idee Mr. Long was so warm, thoff I allus hed an idee he was warm—ish. Now, my lass, it's nobbut the day ; you mun name the day an' let's hev it forrad.'

'I don't know what day——' said Iphis, miserably.

'We—a!' ejaculated her father, a mixture of contempt, impatience, and pleasure in the tone. 'What folks you women are! Ah, well, Long, I knew you were all right. Iphis has plenty o' sense or——'

'She wouldn't be thy——'

'Heigh! heigh! heigh!' interrupted the farmer, afraid of old Long's inconsiderate tongue. 'Bud we'll sattle the day i' th' morning. Draw thy chair up, Iphis.

'I'm not cowd,' said she, excusing herself.

'I wish I could say the same,' muttered Mr. Long, with an implied shiver.

'Chuck some more coals on,' said Cow-

lamb, rather royally. 'Heigh, Mr. Long, your glass is empty; you'll have a drop more gin? We mun ha' the lamp lit, missis.'

'Not a drop, thankee,' said Mr. Long, with a deprecatory motion of his hand. 'Maybe I will just afore I go to bed, but I'll wind a bit. That there nephy of a parson, I'll fit him out, d—— him. He thought he'd do fine things when he'd got me in the buryhole. I'll show him a thing or two—and that owd witch, blast her, *she* thought she was going to collyfogle me into taking her to church, weazened owd——'

'Chut, chut, Mr. Long!'

'Oh, but I'm telling you, Cowlamb. But I s'll be out on her, damme. When I get back I s'll gie her marching orders. I know the owd devil 'll whimper'—some satisfaction in Mr. Long's voice—'but she'll ha' to get ower it; she'll not get ower me as long as she doesn't p'ison me or do owt wi' me. Lord, I'm gittin' an owd man, Cowlamb, and

there's no telling what the owd termagant would do. I think, Cowlamb, I shall say nowt to her till the day I'm wed, eh?' Mr. Long rubbed his hands gleefully, his second thought was best; he sat staring with owlish wisdom across at Cowlamb, seeking approval. A moment before he was whimpering with senile fear.

'Better say nowt,' advised Cowlamb with a sagacious curl of his lower lip; 'women are scattle creatures. It ud be blazed about all ower the country side.'

'Blast 'em!' ejaculated Mr. Long, fervently. His eyes now glared upon Iphis, she thought lividly. Then they sparkled with an impurity that brought the colour to Iphis's face and neck. It was as if she had been scorched. Ingenuous as she was, she felt the colour of the old man's thoughts. Even some of this feeling crept over Cowlamb, for he moved uneasily in his chair, and after a moment's space turned to Iphis.

'Iphis, thou can go and ask thy mother

to bring a bit o' supper in, I begin to feel edgish. Mr. Long maybe can do wi' a bit. Damaris 'll be gone to bed by this ; just see about it. I begin to feel as if it was time to go up the wooden hill, heigho!' yawned he —'what do you say, Mr. Long ? What time do you go to bed at your house ?'

'Eight i' winter, nine i' summer, that's my time. I used to be up first man, but, damme, these last few years I've seemed to be fonder o' bed in a morning; but what's the good o' me getting up ? I can't git after folks as I used to could. And that lad o' mine and that lass ligs i' bed till six or seven o'clock, and I used to rave 'em up at four. Iphis mun towel 'em, though, when she gits there. Lord, Cowlamb, 't is high time somebody was at my place. What d'ye think that lad o' mine did t' other week ?'

'Nay, now, one can't guess,' returned Cowlamb.

'Why, we was out o' coal, so I sent him to Graythornes for a barrow-load. About a

hundredweight I said would do. It was nobbut a couple o' miles to Graythornes, and I started him as soon as he'd hed his breakfast, and the devil didn't git back till we'd all got wer dinners. I would ha' leathered him if I could ha' gotten at him, but,' chuckled Mr. Long, 'I thowt I'd pay him off another way. I says to him, "Now, young helterface, ya s'll take that barrow and fetch me another hundredweight fra Haveluck." '

'Haveluck?' ejaculated Cowlamb; 'why, it's twelve miles.'

''Tis, every yard on't,' assented Mr. Long, gleefully. 'Lord, didn't he look sour; and begun chapping—"Ya young devil," says I, "I'll larn ye to be hafe a day going two miles for a hundred o' coals." But, Cowlamb, be dal'd if he wasn't more'n a match for me.'

'Nay,' temporised Cowlamb.

'Gad, he was though. I never seed no more on him that night; and that owd bitch of a Miss Grinstead tried to make me uneasy. Hang it, I couldn't sleep. I didn't know

what had come to him. Lord, Cowlamb, I felt pleased when I see him and his barrow, his big feet, gammy legs, helter face, tow head, and all looking as solid. Hang it, Cowlamb, I tried to be mad, and hit at him wi' my stick when he come near. I got my hat and stood at the door to receive the young lord. I shouted to him, "Why didn't ya come home last neet, you young devil?" and says he, whimpering, "It was dark." "Dark!" says I. "I'd dark ye if I could nobbut retch ye. Ha' ye had owt to eat?" "Yes, sir," says he. "Why," says I, "where did ye git it?" "I put up at the Saracen," says he; "ya allus put up there." Well, Cowlamb, what could I say to such a limb? I didn't know what to say; it clean took my wind away. Here I'd seven-and-sixpence to pay for him; he'd had his tea and supper, his bed and breakfast, and pints o' beer. Oh, lor'! oh, lor!'

Cowlamb was laughing silently with tears

in his eyes, Mr. Long musing, closing his eyes with fierce deliberation.

'A deep young divil that Mr. Bowser, humph. I'll fix him though. Last summer he used to hide hissen i' th' standing corn, and there I used to be hollo-ing mysen hoarse. He's a scoundrel, and he's teld the lass I'm the contrariest old beast he's iver lived wi'. What's to be done wi' such like jokers, Cowlamb, eh?'

'You'll part wi' him at May?'

'I shall, Cowlamb, you may depend on that. I could put up wi' him if he wasn't bone idle, but all on 'em git idle, every man jack, if they comes willing. My owd pony's got sandburnt and greasy heels, and my harness and gig isn't fit to be seen. But things 'll be different, eh, Cowlamb?'

'Heigh, heigh, Iphis 'll waken 'em up,' returned Cowlamb, encouragingly.

The lamp on the chimney-piece, placed there until the table was set, cast a strong

light on ceiling and hearth-rug, creating dense shadow elsewhere ; but Mr. Long had the full benefit of the illumination.

'Now, sit to Mr. Long,' invited Cowlamb, removing the lamp, and placing it in the centre of the table.

The aspect of the room looked less weird again. Cowlamb had the impression that Iphis was affected by such trifles as this.

'Well, I think I will,' returned Mr. Long, 'though I think, Cowlamb, you're allus in for feeding one.'

'Will you have ale?' asked Cowlamb, unsentimentally.

'No ; I niver drink no beer. I aint drunk any o' twenty year. Weant Iphis sit down?' inquired Mr. Long, petulantly.

'She's helping her mother. You see, Mr. Long, the gell's gone to bed.'

'Time we were all there,' retorted Mr. Long, snappishly. 'I'll wait while they come, then,' said he, stubbornly ; 'I hate eating by mysen'

'Here, Iphis and missis—come!' shouted Cowlamb, trucklingly.

Iphis was congratulating herself on escaping part of her ordeal. What a night it had been for her! In the kitchen she could not talk to relieve herself. She felt that she had no one to confide in—what was her mother, so terribly soulless—a creature of wax before her husband, as keen, too, of her ha'penny, as the saying is. Indeed her husband had sometimes occasion for complaint, his wife grew almost too parsimonious for him. Iphis scrutinised her mother's face; if she had seen the faintest spark of sympathy there Iphis would have fallen upon her bosom. But in it there was no sign that Mrs. Cowlamb was shocked at the compact, or deemed Mr. Long's intentions outrageous. If Iphis had spoken to her mother then, what reply would she have got? That worthy woman would have looked craftily into her daughter's eyes, and advised her to yield on the strength of the old man not lasting many years. But

that was not the advice or sympathy Iphis wanted.

Iphis was most assiduous at table, compelled by the unwavering eyes of her father. Yet, when released, the strange hunted look in her face did not escape her elderly wooer. The old man was not without sense, and there was much of the old Satan left in him yet. He knew that he was being 'totted up,' as he put it. Future benefit placed against present disadvantages. He could scarcely prevent himself resenting the loathful look of her clear, grey young eyes.

The old man was cleanly and well ordered. As a grandparent he might have been idolised. He had been the pink of cleanliness and buckdom in his day, and his love of water and clean linen was yet with him a first consideration. He was not an old man sinking into a dotage that was an infliction upon every one. His faculties were likely to be clear to the last, and his personal care of himself as pronounced. Mr. Long's

great mistake was his bachelorhood. Left master of himself when a mere boy, it was his boast that no one had ever controlled him. In his early youth his life had been far from stainless. His reputation increased with manhood, an epoch almost Mephistophelian succeeding, according to gossip. Now in his old age he loved to chuckle over his rascalities. Many an hour he sat, pleased with himself, eyeing the female portion of his household with a stare so diabolically owlish and malignant that it never failed to disconcert them. It was the set stare of a cat anticipating, sure of its prey. Then he would chuckle to himself, swear and curse his gout and his infirmities. Simple-hearted villagers believed that his life was prolonged to give him opportunity for repentance. Though they might deplore his outrageous behaviour to them, his blasphemous language, his tyrannical usage of them, they still regarded him as a man who would be missed when he was gone. Mr. Long was no churl; he was free with his

ale barrel, his bread and cheese, his dinners and suppers, and never forgetful at Christmas. Every woman had her half-crown, every man his lump of beef, according to the size of his family. His father had done it before him, and Mr. Long held to old custom tenaciously. One Christmas, the weather being open, and the old man taking, as it were, a new lease of life, managed to hobble out of his house into the high road. He noticed the road needed some repair before his gate. Hobbling further down the road, he came to a round-backed, decrepit labourer scraping mud.

'Now, Billy,' said Mr. Long, 'ye mun leave that squad and go and mend that bit o' road afore my gate.'

'I darsn't do it, squire. The overseer teld me to go no furder than the beck. It's out o' the parish.'

Mr. Long was well aware that the old man was speaking truly, but it was like a spark to a powder magazine.

'You dare to tell me you won't, you old pauper!' shouted Mr. Long, vehemently, raising his stick, which he suddenly recollected he needed for support.

'I darsn't; I'm sorry, I am, but I darsn't do it.'

'Darsn't!' sneered the village tyrant; 'we'll see, we'll see, you old rascal.'

A twinge of gout further embittered Mr. Long. Excited, he began to be in some trepidation about reaching his house again. His pride and rage were too great to allow him to request his almost equally decrepit adversary to assist him. Huge beads of sweat stood on his face, more with fear than continuance or increase of pain. He succeeded in reaching his house, and dropped into his chair with a groan. He was still enraged, and his limbs trembling with excitement.

'Is Nanny Measom among 'em, Miss Grinstead?'

'Yes, sir,' replied Miss Grinstead, busily

engaged folding half-crowns in half-sheets of note-paper.

'I shan't give her one.'

Miss Grinstead still continued folding.

'You may tell her I shan't give her one,' repeated Mr. Long as Miss Grinstead started off on her commission.

Old Long waited impatiently his housekeeper's return.

'Now, what did she say?' asked he, expectantly; 'was she cut up?'

'No, Mr. Long.'

'She wasn't?' exclaimed he, astonished at such fortitude. 'What did she say?'

'Why, Mr. Long, she said, "God bless his honour, I must and will pray for him?"'

'Oh, d—— her, here take her her half-crown. I won't be prayed for, tell her.' In his passion and discomfiture he hobbled round the kitchen, swearing at old Nanny, at her husband, the cause of offence, and Miss Grinstead for all being in such a diabolical plot.

Miss Grinstead set off hastily before Mr.

Long could again change his mind. She left him fretting and fuming. When she returned she dare not tell him that old Nanny Measom, overjoyed, had further declared her readiness now to pray for him three times a day.

Internally Iphis felt too hot and excited to eat. What she swallowed was tasteless to her. She felt herself fast as if in a cage. How could she free herself? She might run away, certainly. Be determined to stay away. Take service. And what then?—Her father might relent, seek her out, and let her have her own sweet will.

'Never'—a voice whispered within her. He would be more likely to declare that as she made her bed so must she lie on it. He would never consent to Ephraim Sparrow. Oh, she knew her father's inflexibility. He would resent her defection until his dying day. He might be taken off before the moment of relenting came to him, and she would live to the end of her days in poverty, and go out charing, as her grandmother had done.

These were Iphis's thoughts, recurring again and again. It was indeed nonsense. Her father would fume, declare himself obdurate; but whatever attitude he might show to the man, his own child would never be cast off. But Iphis was the same as other young people, possessed with a marvellous disposition to attribute the worst to her elders.

How thankful she was to see her father piloting the old man up the staircase! She gave such a gasping sigh of relief, Mrs. Cowlamb looked up and asked her what was wrong with her.

'Nothing,' replied Iphis, in ill-temper; 'I'm sleepy.'

'Well, we mun ha' these things cleared away, then we'll all go.'

'Can't they stop till morning?'

'Morning?' echoed Mrs. Cowlamb, in horror; 'bless us, what's come ower ye? I'm just as sleepy as you are.'

The task was over at last, and wearily

Iphis ascended to her bedroom. But after undressing and creeping into her bed she found sleep coy in coming, notwithstanding all her soft wooing. She counted sheep passing through a gate, but her mind refused such a trap. Through all her calculation she heard her father's voice across the landing, and she lost count and care when her father got to snoring. She heard the old moon-faced clock on the landing hour by hour, its feeble bell and prolonged groaning. Once or twice she dozed, but some horrible turn of her brain restored her to consciousness. Her day's thoughts recurred to her—her meeting with Ephraim, his explanation, his proposition. Yes, she would run away with Ephraim. Then she became despondent again. Ephraim might incur some frightful punishment if he again absconded, and she believed that he was very dense about taking precautions. If they ran away together they must not take a long time considering. Mr. Long and her father were determined to hurry matters on.

If she could but see Ephraim again. She must see him! If Mr. Long was determined to be married in a fortnight, in a week, careless of expense? People with money can do anything. She would write to Ephraim, and let him know the strait she was in. Oh! if her father only had to drive Mr. Long back again to Snailhorn.

CHAPTER 31.

FORSAKEN.

Though the night had been a long and weary one to her, morning dawned at last. Iphis heard her father's voice calling Damaris up, and she rose and dressed. She found herself down first, Damaris coming into the kitchen after her, slow motioned and her eyes heavy. A few minutes later her father came down, and went off to the farmstead.

'When Damaris has got her milking done, we'll have her wash them bottles out,' said Mrs. Cowlamb; 'it's time that rhubarb wine was out of the cask. We'll bottle it after breakfast, eh?'

Iphis had not taken to the milking again yet. She had been considered too much of an invalid.

The hour glided on, and Damaris returned with her pails. Iphis took them from her, and in the dairy 'siled' the new milk. Afterwards running her finger round yesterday's pancheons, she skimmed off the rich yellow cream with the deftness long practice had given her. The old milk was then poured into pails, and a boy from the farmyard was in readiness to take it to the pigs.

Damaris, her sleeves rolled up, was now rinsing her bottles in a wash-tub.

'You needn't pull the damper out—we'll keep the oven cool, then we can dry the bottles, and start wi' the wine after breakfast,' cried Mrs. Cowlamb to Iphis. 'Damaris may bring them bottles off the gantry; they have been washed, but it' ll sweeten 'em.'

Another hour passed, the breakfast table was set, and breakfast was only deferred for Mr. Long. Presently a commotion was heard on the staircase. Cowlamb, who had been sitting hungry and impatient, jumped up with some alacrity to help the infirm old man in.

'You should ha' hollared out, Mr. Long.'

'Oh, bless ye, Cowlamb, I can git down,' said Mr. Long, wheezily. 'If I'd nobbut a wee nip o' gin I should be as fresh as a daisy.

'To be suer, to be suer,' said Cowlamb, grimly. He muttered *sotto voce* to his wife. He did not wish Iphis to see too much of her intended's peculiarities. 'Git him a drop in a glass; don't put ower much watter in; th'owd man's deep. I think he's like a snipe —he lives on suction.'

Mr. Long had to warm his toes; then he could not tie his shoes. As soon as he had shuffled his feet into them, he looked up inquiringly, exclaiming—

'Oh, the devil!' which meant some one must attend to him, and Cowlamb laboriously went down upon his knees.

'Ya've a lass or a lad might ha' done it. I hadn't so limmock as I was a year or two agone.'

'Now, Mr. Long, sit to,' urged Cowlamb. 'I've a sharpish edge on me. I been up to

the farmstead; I should ha' liked you to ha' seen yon steers I'm turning out.'

'Shall ye summer 'em?'

'No—— Haveluck.'

'Not right sort o' swath land?'

'Not like Snailhorn.'

'Ya was wrong to leave Snailhorn, Cowlamb. *I* missed ye. Ya was a good nabour.'

Suddenly there was a violent explosion. The oven door burst open with a loud report. There was a shower of steam, a discharge of water, or some fluid. Excepting Mr. Long, every one started from their seats.

'Good God!' exclaimed Mr. Long, trembling like an aspen leaf, compelled to sit stationary, with the terrified feeling of a man who cannot move out of danger though sure of his own destruction.

'What ha' ye got i' that oven?' demanded Cowlamb, wrathfully.

'Why, nowt but empty bottles,' gasped Mrs. Cowlamb.

'Rubbish!' returned her unconvinced, un-

appeased husband; 'empty bottles wouldn't blow the oven out.'

'Why, now,' said Mrs. Cowlamb, with the resignation of a long-suffering martyr, 'if that silly gell—oh, deary me,' murmured she, sinking into her chair despairingly, and wiping her face with her apron, 'it 'll be a blessing when Pag-rag[1] day comes. We've done well to keep out o' worse.'

'Well,' cried Cowlamb, pointedly sarcastic, 'no rambling off into owt else.'

'Iphis heerd me tell her as plain as I could speak to put them empty bottles off the gantry into the oven. She's been an' got some dead beer I put in a bottle, an' put it in among 'em, stupid creatur'. She might ha' seen the cork.'

'You're a strange, careless woman,' shouted her husband, more wroth now after the explanation, 'wi' all your cleverness.'

The farmer's temper frightened Mr. Long, because of its vehemence.

[1] Pack-rag—leaving day, May 14th.

'D—— it, Cowlamb, there's a good breakfast afore ye——'

'Damaris! Damaris!' squeaked Mrs. Cowlamb. But Damaris did not answer.

'Here sit ye down,' said her husband, ungraciously, 'we'll ha' wer breakfast ower afore we've any more swilling and swalling.'

'Bud just look at the fender!' remonstrated his wife, miserably.

'I'll get up and make that reight,' said Iphis.

'Heigh, heigh,' said Mr. Long encouragingly, 'mop it up, it's nobbut three ha'porth o' beer after all. Law, there was a fine crack.'

And still Mr. Long eyed them suspiciously. He was not quite sure it was not a trick to upset his serenity. Iphis? Well, she was a young lass, she had a mischievous eye. He liked her all the better for a spice of mischief. As for the old woman, she had never been a favourite of his. Old Mr. Long's recollection went years back. He remembered

her Farmer Cowlamb's servant. He had cracked several shady jokes at the time at Farmer Cowlamb's expense. The truth to be told, Mr. Long still remembered her as the servant.

Now he muttered to himself—

'Cowlamb niver dreamed she'd turn out such a nagging old shrew.'

Mrs. Cowlamb had tried her best to ingratiate herself with the old man, but he set his back up against her. He would never make any talk to her. If she spoke to him, he answered her certainly, but his manner was so icy, she felt herself frozen.

He now began to fidget. He had Haveluck on his mind, and to Haveluck he must go.

'I can git by train from here, can't ee?'

'Oh, heigh,' returned Cowlamb, at the first moment somewhat at sea.

'I mun go to-day. It's a long drive fra here. I've been thinking I'll go by train, Cowlamb. I can have a fly home.'

'Well, just as you like. I'll drive you if——'

'I've a fancy to go my way,' said Mr. Long, stubbornly.

'I'll go wi' ye. I want to see what prices young fat beasts are making. I want to do a bit o' business.'

'I shall be glad o' your company, Cowlamb.'

'Iphis can go down to the station with us, an' bring the mare back.'

As the train was due at nine o'clock, there was some bustle. Iphis harnessed the mare, her father came out and helped her with the trap; then Mr. Long appeared, enveloped in wraps, having some resemblance to a mummy.

'Iphis,' said her father, seriously, 'Mr. Long says it's to come off three weeks next Thursday. That day's as good as another for owt I see—— Why don't ye speak?' demanded he sharply, 'i'stead o' gizzenin' like that.'

'One day's as good as another to me,' said she, without any show of interest.

'Mr. Long, by his face, was certainly in a state of tumultuous excitement.

'That'll do, lovey. Don't bother her, Cowlamb.'

Iphis's cheek was blanched; her heart went thump, thump; her bosom heaved with the misery of despair.

'Now then, get a bonnet or a hat on; we mun be off.' Her father was curt.

Iphis got in behind, and while they were progressing towards Moortown she had time to collect her thoughts. She could get down to Willowby and see Ephraim, but then she reasoned the blacksmith would be sure to make it his business to come down to the farm and acquaint her father. If she sent a messenger, Ephraim would not be allowed to absent himself in working hours. She could write to Ephraim and explain matters, then her lover would not think the worst of her.

'Good-bye,' said Mr. Long; and fervently,

'God bless ye, lovey; I shall mak' ye reight to-day. Eh, Cowlamb? I mean it to-day.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Long,' replied she in her thinnest voice, her father's eye compelling her to speak. 'Shall you be home to-night, father?'

'To be suer I shall. Send the lad down to meet the four train.'

Iphis was exultant now. She could write her letter, and post it with a delicious sense of freedom and certainty that there would be no miscarriage. She pushed the mare along, and stopped in front of a small shop where she had bought her crochet-cotton and coloured wool. Janey Waterland had had her share of trouble in this world. In her youth she had been exquisitely pretty, and as exquisitely nice in choosing a lover; so nice that she lived on to middle-age before she was won. Then followed her misfortunes. She married a youth; he squandered her little patrimony, and then ran away with his cousin, whom he had persuaded his indulgent better-half to

take in to learn the business. Janey might have liquidated in these times, but she was 'sold up.' Year by year her little shop became less and less frequented, she supplemented her stock with sweetstuffs and home-made ginger beer. But she had fallen on hard times. However, she still continued to take great interest in young folks, had always for them an endearing word in every sense, her face still retaining its youthful freshness, lending effect to such petting. Her face was like a ripe apple, and her hair was brown and silky. Janey had returned to her maiden name, her only bitterness against the rascally young husband who had used her so ill. If any one called her 'Mrs.,' she would request them to address her 'Miss,' 'just to oblige me, dearie.'

Iphis gave a willing urchin a penny to hold her horse. She entered the little shop and asked Janey if she could furnish her with a sheet of note-paper, an envelope, and a postage-stamp. She wrote her letter, and

imbursed Janey so handsomely, the old lady would not be satisfied unless Iphis took a few sweetstuffs or gingerbreads.

'If thou can't eat 'em, joy, thou knows some little folks that can.'

There was such a persuasive ring in Janey Waterland's voice that Iphis was fain to accept, though much against her will.

And the letter she had written. It was nothing very ornate. It was not even grotesque. Not very choice in composition either. It is certain farmer Cowlamb's boarding-school money had a most insufficient return.

'Dear Ephraim,' she wrote, 'I write these few lines, Hoping you are well as this leaves me at Present. Mr. Long has gone away to Haveluck. Father went with him. I am to be married to Mr. Long three weeks next Thursday. Dear Ephraim, I can't help it, or else I would. Father will have it so. I write these few lines so that you may'nt think I am playing you a dirty trick. And you musn't see me any more, for I couldn't bear

it, and I do hate Mr. Long, so no more at present from, yours affectionately, IPHIS COWLAMB.'

After it was posted she felt more satisfied with herself, but a hundred times sadder. Something in the self-imposed task had kept her up ; now it was accomplished, she had only her dreary thoughts of herself left.

How would Ephraim receive it? She had told him that he must not see her again, but that was but a feeler. Would he endeavour to help her? But how could he help her? It was a long day for her, her mother unusually taciturn, having had her grievance out with Damaris during Iphis's absence. The mother had not an ounce of sympathy in her narrow, sordid soul to draw the poor girl out into some confession of her needs. The daily routine of housework was all that occupied Mrs. Cowlamb's mind, and the showing up of the delinquencies, awkwardness, and thoughtlessness of her servant girl.

Four o'clock came at last. The mare had

been despatched. The noise of the railway train could be heard at the house. From her bed-room Iphis could see the white smoke for some miles, thrown out against dark fir plantations. She could see the slate roof of the railway-station, shining in the declining afternoon sun. A beautiful prospect it was. Moortown, a red town, picturesque, trees among the houses, trees encircling it; behind it wooded hills and variegated fields, white roads, and grey stone churches.

'It's in good time,' said Mrs. Cowlamb, looking at the clock, 'Job wouldn't give hissen ower much time. Better an hour too soon than a minute too late when you've owt to do wi' trains. Your faither 'll be fine an' mad if Job hasn't got up the station hill.'

In about a quarter of an hour the farmer strode into his house, divesting himself of his light drab overcoat. Although Cowlamb was bitter in his cynicism, sneering at gentleman farmers, he affected this mark of

the correct thing in a well-to-do farmer's apparel. 'I want my tea,' said he, brusquely. 'Where's Iphis?'

'I don't know,' returned Mrs. Cowlamb, ungraciously; 'I've hardlins had a word fra her all day. She's moping about the house somewhere. Iphis!'

Cowlamb muttered something. He could scarcely have considered that he fashioned a word. It was a sound a little in advance of a sigh, but it expressed his feeling of disappointment—unrequited zeal.

After he had eaten and drank, he recovered something of his equanimity. Iphis had placed herself at the table.

'Did you leave Haveluck afore the owd gentleman?' inquired Mrs. Cowlamb, feeling it necessary to say something.

'No, I just send seed him off, an' then I'd nobbut just time to git to the station an' my train was in. I meant gitting a bit o' fish. It was cheap. There was a lot o' smacks in. 'Why th' owd man stands father

to two or three, I'd no idee. I think he's inta iverything that pays money. It's a way o' making money quick an' all. Times isn't what they was wi' farmers. I've half a mind to go in a bit mysen. Not ower ranish at first.'

'I wish you had got a bit o' fish,' said Mrs. Cowlamb, with miserable regret. Ten to one if her husband had, her grief would have been more poignant. 'Stewin' and frizzlin'' in the afternoon was in her black calendar; she had a pious horror of her fire-bars being contaminated with grease.

'Iphis,' said her father, attempting jocularity, 'now thou mun pick up thy crumbs. Law, if thou nobbut knew all—why Mr. Long's been as good as his word. This very day he went to his lawyer an's hed his will drawn up. He's teld me iverything he's hed put in it, and thy name's in it; it's nobbut his name wants putting to it, signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of me and of

each other, an' all that rigmarole, sithee. Harkee, Iphis, thou'll hev iverything, barring a few pounds that's a fleabite to what the owd man's worth. The owd fellow's reight, that relation of his has been a deed fool, as the owd man puts it.'

Farmer Cowlamb, even in his exhilaration, could not bring himself to tongue one of his late guest's emphatic words.

'A year or two's time,' continued he,—'why our baen 'll be independent on us all, be a real lady an' look down o' thou an' me, owd woman.'

'Maybe she does now,' whined Mrs. Cowlamb, bitterly.

'I don't know about thou,' retorted her husband, tartly, 'bud I think she thinks a bit of her owd faither.'

'She owt to do,' said Mrs. Cowlamb, determined to be contrary.

'Ya knaw nowt about it,' said Cowlamb, impatience and pettishness expressed by his nose. He pushed his chair away from the

table. 'Ha' they been at th' fallows? I mun go an' see what they've done.'

A day passed, and Cowlamb was so far merciful as not to bring Mr. Long forward. But the following morning the blacksmith appeared at the farm with a most mysterious look on his truculent face. Damaris came into the kitchen.

'Maister, you're wanted.'

'Who is it?' asked Cowlamb, averse to getting up. He was at his breakfast.

'Blacksmith,' responded Damaris, laconically.

Iphis opened wide her eyes, then a horrible fear took possession of her. Had the abominable sycophant intercepted her letter, and thought by bringing it to her father he was currying favour.

'Tell him to come in,' said the farmer, his attention returning to the pig 'chap' he was carving.

The blacksmith stood in the doorway, the scent of the smithy preceding him. He

appeared constrained and puzzled, and yet most oily and obsequious.

'Now then, blacksmith?' said Cowlamb.

'I just come down——.' Then the blacksmith caught sight of the women, and receded a step. 'Another time ud do, Mester Cowlamb. 'I'il be about when you done your break'ast.'

'Nay, I don't want to hinder thee from thy work. What is it? Owt that consarns me?'

'I hardlins knaws. It consarns me. I'd raither hev a word wi' you by yoursen, axin' your pardon, sir.'

Farmer Cowlamb was perhaps a little vexed. Still, he would forego the pleasures of the table for business.

Iphis's terror was culminating. When her father rose, her face blanched, and although she struggled hard to retain her composure her heart went thump, throb—she could hear it.

'Now then, blacksmith!' said Cowlamb, closing the door after him.

'Why, I wanted your advice, Mester Cowlamb,' said the blacksmith, just audibly. 'Ephraim's runned away.'

'Agean!' ejaculated the farmer, surprised. But he could scarcely contain his satisfaction.

'Agean!' echoed the blacksmith. 'I wanted to know if—if *you* think it's worth while me fetching him back?'

'What has that to do wi' me?' blustered Cowlamb. His satisfaction was great, but he did not wish this fellow to see it.

'Why, why, Mester Cowlamb,' stammered the blacksmith, 'you seemed put out afore, when I courted him, an' got him back.'

'Why, now,' returned the farmer, somewhat confusedly, 'I nobbut thowt you a fool for your pains, throwing good money efter bad—warin' money among lawyers, an' losing your own time—that was all.'

'Heigh—bud I had him i' black an' white.'

'How long hed the creatur to stop wi' ye?'

'He'd all his time to make up—I got the money they laid on to him—nobbut a week or two.'

'Well, if I was thou, blacksmith,' said Cowlamb, carelessly, 'I'd ware no more money on him. Thou'll not miss him much; happen he'd do thee no good if t' got him back.'

The blacksmith was so far taken in with the farmer's bluster, and then with his more equable humour, that he thought Cowlamb's counsel good. He was more in love with it when the farmer said—

'You can drink a pint o' ale, blacksmith?'

'Nay—ay—thankee,' replied the blacksmith, as slowly as he could. But his refusal was taken in the right vein.

'Damaris, draw blacksmith a pint o' beer.'

The blacksmith wiped his mouth in anti-

cipation. Iphis could hear him in the scullery drinking ; then he seemed at a loss what to do with the can. He stole into the kitchen on tip-toe, looking about him confusedly.

'Set it on the mangle, blacksmith,' said Cowlamb, graciously.

'Ah—ah! Thankee sir ; good morning.'

'What did he want?' asked Mrs. Cowlamb, inquisitively.

'Nowt—he's on some fool's errand.'

That was sufficient for Mrs. Cowlamb. She rarely persisted in questioning her liege lord.

Iphis could see that her father was upheld with some secret satisfaction. He would scarcely be so calm and collected if her fears had not proved groundless.

As Iphis rose to go to her chamber work Cowlamb whispered the intelligence to his wife, chuckling over it. Iphis did not hear what was said, but she knew something was said. Before the morning was over Iphis asked her mother point-blank. Mrs. Cow-

lamb was somewhat cowed at Iphis's manner. She told her.

It was the last straw. Iphis felt indescribably forsaken. But she felt that she could get through her marriage better with Ephraim away. If she could only convey to him the intelligence that he need not now fear pursuit.

CHAPTER 32.

FOOTPRINTS.

We upon whom the years do not press so very heavily feel ourselves advancing when we see the baby girls in long frocks, and the baby boys sucking their meerschaums.

'Why, she's nobbut a baen,' whimpered Mrs. Towse; 'seems nobbut like yisterday when she was born. No baen o' mine should hev such an owd heathen, not if he was as rich as Crusoe.'

''Tis all in our natural,' said Towse, philosophically.

'He's a heart o' stone, that's what he hes,' declared Mrs. Towse.

'Nay, missis. Cowlamb ploughed my fallows, an' led me all my muck,' defended

her more loyal husband. 'When one hes to pay for iverything, it rhymes up. I hadn't a going to say nowt agean him.'

Mrs. Towse shook her head, unconvinced. What was the use of entering into any prolix plaint? Towse did not care for Ephraim's love affair, nor think of Iphis's youth; there were no romantic susceptibilities about Towse; if there ever had been any, they had all exuded the day he took his bride to a lonely cottage in a lonely valley on a Wold farm. The prosaic fact then lay before him that he had to find her victuals and clothes, and a shepherd had little time for day dreams.

Others besides Mrs. Towse deplored the coming event, and expressed themselves much more virulently. But what good could all that do? It had all oozed out—how, Farmer Cowlamb could not tell; but it was common talk, and he was not over well pleased thereat, for he had intended to keep things as quiet as possible. Some of his acquaintances met him at market. Their expressions

of surprise annoyed him. They did not cavil, but they evidently commiserated Iphis.

'I say, Cowlamb, do you think Long's exactly the fellow for your girl?'

'If she's satisfied——' began Cowlamb, with a sardonic, repelling curl of his under lip.

'Oh, aye——, only one likes to see the lads pairing off wi' the lasses. She'll do well enow. There's money. The owd gentleman has a tidy nest egg, I'll be bound.'

It wanted but a few days now. Iphis's dress was ordered of the most fashionable milliner in Moortown, her wedding cakes of the confectioner; there were preparations now commencing for some unexampled cookery, a couple of dressmakers had been busy in the house the whole of the week. Iphis, her heart ever in any stir or commotion, had become strangely interested in all that was going on, but at times she was seized with a dull frenzy, or with some pang of despair, and she was ready to curse God and die.

The women working in the house were far from mirthful, as was their wont. Iphis sometimes caught a glance from one or other, revealing the constructions they were placing upon her character. No doubt they thought her mercenary, unmaidenly, and Iphis was curt with them, and kept them at a distance. Her father saw only one side of her, and he believed her perfectly reconciled. Had any one breathed a doubt of her he would have laughed them to scorn. Did she look, act, eat, like one lovelorn? Clearly she had common sense—she was of the right metal. Iphis thus found herself regarded with less jealousy; she had perfect freedom; with regard to her goings out and comings in she excited now no suspicion.

But what was her freedom to her now? Valueless. Of Ephraim she had heard nothing; he had given her up; there was no sign from him. It was hard fighting against the iron hand. She could not well blame her lover; she was too generous. Would she

ever see Ephraim again—hear from him? Oh! it was bitterness to contemplate him marrying some one else. But she could not expect him to remain single for her sake. She drew a long breath. He would not wait for her being free again surely. Mr. Long might live to be a hundred. Her father had once said so, long before all this was contemplated, that he believed the old man had got the 'dry wizen.' Those were his very words. If he did live to be that age, neither Ephraim nor she would be so very old, but to look forward the time was terrible. She had not lived so many years in the world yet.

'He would maybe be afraid to speak out then, after all them years,' mused Iphis, sadly; 'but I would speak out if he only looked at me.'

Of a night she opened her window and looked at the crescent moon. How calmly it looked down upon the earth! There was a mistiness around it. There in the heavy blue its brilliancy seemed not to suffer, however.

It shone upon the earth unrepressed, not disheartened. She was filled with awe, and a sense of her own littleness seemed to break in upon her. That queen of the night looked down upon a world—there were those whose troubles were greater, whose miseries were never to be abated, souls wrung with anguish, and bodies writhing in acutest pain. Could they look up at the calm glory? Were their hearts less hopeful than hers? Where was he—Ephraim? In some crowded town, where people scarcely thought of the sky and its beautiful transfiguration, where the pale orb was seen only from windows in the roofs or between the tiers of houses, if people were only not too absorbed to look up. Or had he got assistance from that relative of his he had spoken of to her, and now was thinking of her, yes of her, as he paced the deck of a ship on a weary waste of water? Was he looking up at the pale moon with bitterness in his heart, or sorrow, or despair? Ah, she could not bring herself to think that he was

thinking harshly of her. She would close her window and slip silently into her bed. She was much like a child who, after having the delusions of its happy childhood swept away, calmly seeks its rest tearless, but with an indefinable mistrust of the future.

Day followed day; no day marked by any event of interest, unless the appearance of the cake evoked what might have been the keen edge of curiosity. And what woman, if ever so badly treated, young and fair, and with some vanity, could behold without a thrill a silk dress, and that her wedding one? Damaris had gone, happy to shake the dust off her feet, gone with a cynical remark on the parsimony, the greed, the love of money inherent in the Cowlamb family. Damaris, like all the rest of servant girls, had the worst character for her last place, but probably would look backward in a few months with less spiteful feeling. Damaris could not see this dress, but her successor—if anything

rawer, and with a name certainly more to Mrs. Cowlamb's liking—was taken into the best bed-room to behold it. The poor girl was too impressed to speak ; retiring on tip-toe, her face was as awestruck as if she had witnessed the preparations for a coronation spectacle.

Iphis only felt herself her own self in her bedroom. Night after night she contemplated the heavens out of her window. Some nights were starlight, and so still the air, she had queer fancies that she had only to speak for Ephraim to hear her. Her heart was like a cold stone, so near the dreaded day was coming. She held her window by the rod a moment or two. It opened in the French fashion. Then while she lingered she fancied she heard a window open ; still lingering she heard it close, then there was a rustle among the shrubs, then all was quiet again. She opened her window wide, there was no wind ; probably an ewe had found its way into the garden, her father had heard it, perhaps he

had gone down again. He must have been in bed some time, he was not a man to sit in his bed-room musing, looking out of window. He would be annoyed at having to go down, but then he was one of the sort who would never rest with the idea on his mind. She had to pull her window sash to smartly, for like much of the joinery work of the present day, done to contract, it had not the most perfect fit. Had she but known!

'That owd nest under the spout come tumbling down. I meant that lad to knock it down when he was cleaning windows. It wok me. I thowt there was summuts wrong ower yonder, an' they'd come to rouse me. I spok, but nobody spok back, an' then I seed there was a lot o' muck o' th' window sill," said Cowlamb.

'It wackened me first,' said Mrs. Cowlamb. 'I thowt it was somebody trying to get in.'

'Bah!' ejaculated Cowlamb, contemptuously.

It was a happy thing that the farmer was unsuspicious of night marauders, that Iphis was reticent, that she forbore mentioning her impressions of stray sheep wandering among the shrubs. For one thing, she did not wish her father to learn that she spent an hour or more after they were all abed, gazing at the stars, or at a moon fitfully gleaming out of opaque clouds.

In the after part of the day, for she was somewhat dubious yet, she passed through the door in the wall. She went to the end of the house. She was standing under her father's window. Looking up, she saw that under the spout the martin's nest was intact. Her eyes fell to the ground; she started violently; there was a footmark, certainly no quadruped's, but a biped's, too large for a woman, yet small for a man. The soil was hard, and the impression was faint. She stooped down a little—there was a faint re-

cord of nails. She went to the shrubs ; there the soil caught less sun, and was loose and moist. There was sufficient disturbance there to show that some one had hurried through, and climbed the hurdles, for soil was on them. All trace was lost from this point, for the field was laid down with seeds.

She wondered—but she dare not build up a hope. But she kept her own counsel, remaining silent, more from acquired habit. She could chatter away from home, but taciturnity was the family trait. She had become supine, submissive, and nothing stirred her out of her dreary apathy.

To-morrow! The words had for her an overpowering significance. And after to-morrow ? 'To-morrow never comes,' had been an aphorism puzzling her much when a child, but on the morrow she would wake to her destiny. At night Mr. Long came, gay and sparkling. He certainly looked ten years younger than when she saw him last. He was quite fashionable, scrupulously got up,

not a speck of dust upon him; and his face, so smooth for an old man, Iphis could have fancied that it had been ironed. The crow's feet about his eyes were always observed first, but Iphis noted that they were much less distinct.

Her window had been left open; she went to it to close it. How different the night to the preceding one! There was a breeze, cold, as if the March winds lingered. The moon was overcast; none of its liquid light chastening the hours of darkness, but the coldness of the night air seemed to refresh her. Her father had told her to get to bed and sleep well, so that she might rise fresh in the morning. Then had looked towards Mr. Long and laughed. The morrow would be a day requiring a cool head. He had said all this in good faith, with a joking, fond smile, satisfied at last with her. But she felt in no humour for sleep; she was, indeed, too wakeful, only it was a relief getting out of the range of those basilisk eyes. She opened her

window wider and leaned out, but her eyes could not penetrate the murky gloom.

'I believe it will be rainy,' she muttered.

How could she expect a smiling sun? She believed in the superstition; the sun must shine on a wedding-day. Without closing her window, she retired a few paces, and stood with her arm across the bed-foot, absent-minded, pre-occupied. She blew out her candle—her father might see it—and then subsided into her reverie again. She was roused by hearing, or fancying that she heard, the shrubs below disturbed again. She went to the window; it was the wind getting up perhaps. But no; the night was still, heavy-laden, the moon hidden in the impenetrable vault overhead. Had it already begun to patter with rain? Some drops might have fallen. She put out her hand. No, not raining yet. The wind was in the north, and her bed-room had a north aspect. She could look out of it in a line with the hills, and imagine where the sea lay, and where Snail-

horn and where Haveluck. The shrubs stirred below again. She held her breath; she was a little afraid. Some one was below. Was it a robber? She remembered her fears when a child at Snailhorn, the servant girl recounting weirdsome tales of robbers and murderers coming in the night-time to lonely houses, and the terror clung to her yet. But so near Moortown! She listened with bated breath. She fancied that she could hear some one below, stealthily creeping along the house wall. Then all was still again. Should she speak from the window? It would perhaps give the prowler below to understand that he was detected; if it did not evoke an answer, she could quickly rouse the house. She hesitated partly from fear. Something rattled against the window, came into the room. She was afraid to move. She would have screamed, but a voice below, although in but a whisper, went far to quell her fears. She started, and the voice again whispered—

'Iphis?'

It was Ephraim! Why had he come?—he could have no pity. Her heart leapt into her mouth with sudden exultation. He had come to save her!

CHAPTER 33.

INTO THE DARKNESS.

That peer of the realm, carrying the time-honoured title of Habro, could not feel flattered with the honour done to him in Moortown. The Habro Arms supplied the thirstiest souls in Moortown, the company frequenting it not the most select. The police made frequent raids, Sam the landlord escaping punishment by the skin of his teeth. He had an obsequious tongue, and somehow had a trick of appeasing the powers that be. But then Sam had consorted with gentlemen. He had ridden after the Habro pack as second horseman to a gentleman, and now carrying on the business of a horsebreaker followed the

hounds proudly enough on some tit entrusted to his coaching. Two thirsty sawyers coming in from a long walk, their long cross-cuts over their shoulders, called for their quart of ale each. They only breathed once drinking it, and one turning to the other said :—

'Shall we hev another, Billy?'

The other seemed to hesitate a moment.

'No—o—o, we'll sleck furder on, lad.'

Sam, lost in admiration at the feat, did not notice the approach of a cart and horse. It was not yet dark, but growing dusk. The horse and cart turned into the yard, and Sam, recalled to himself, for he was his own ostler, hastened after the traveller.

'Hello, young man!' cried Sam in recognition, then excusing himself, 'I beg pardon, I thowt you was a young man I knowed, as lev at Willowby. I've hed a hoss or two shod there. First glance like I thowt you was him, but you must be his twin brother, you've more hair about the face.'

Sam had caught sight, too, of the name

on the cart:—Ebenezer Doads, fish-dealer, Haveluck.

'You're i' th' fish line, I see.'

The traveller did not contradict him, so Sam continued his querying style of talking.

'A useful owd thing that o' yours? One o' th' hesbeens, an' a good lot o' wear an' tear in her yit? I shouldn't wonder if this owd thing hasn't galloped? Bounced across country, maybe? Law, what a lot o' owd Lord Henry's bloodsticks there is about. There niver was such a man. Are ye goin' on?'

'I don't know,' returned the traveller with some hesitation. 'You need nobbut take her bridle off. I'll have a quartern of oats. Have you any beans?'

'Beans? to be sure I hev.'

'I'll go inside a minute an have a pint o' ale and a mouthful o' summats to eat.'

The traveller waited until he was assured that the old mare had made havoc of her feed, as if fully sensible of ostler's tricks.

'Nay,' said Sam, sensitively, 'I've none o' them pranks about me; I've a bit o' feeling for a dumb creatur. I'm satisfied wi' one payment for a bit o' horse meal. Bud you're reight, sir, to stand by—'tis done often, more shame be it.'

The traveller had to run the gauntlet of eyes in the taproom. At a corner of a table the landlord's wife laid a cloth and placed upon it the cold mutton of their day's dinner, flanked by an uncut loaf of bread and a huge segment of American cheese. By-and-by a white pot of ale supplemented the spread.

One or two in the taproom were evidently labouring under the same impression as had been landlord Sam. But Sam muttered a sharp correction.

'He's a cockle man, I tell ye. I seed it on his cart. An' he's a close un.'

One of them ventured to address the gastronomist.

'How's things at Haveluck?'

'Fairish,' said the eater.

'Are ye back agean to night?'

The eater nodded.

'Will ye stand owt?' more boldly.

The traveller paused, lay down his knife.

'What for?'

'Oh, I'd knaw, good o' th' house, eh, landlord?'

'Them that asks shan't have and them that doesn't ask mun go beout. I pay for what I git. That's straight, isn't it?'

'All reight; no offence, mister.'

The traveller finished his repast, beckoning the landlord out.

'You'll see to my hoss. I've a bit o' business to do. Maybe I shall have to go on to Treminster, I'm not from Haveluck—I'm from Glamford. I picked the cart up at Haveluck——'

'At a sale, to be suer. You see,' breathed Sam, apologetically, 'what a little thing sets one all wrong.'

Sam deemed it his duty to set things right inside the house.

'Why,' declared one, 'he said fish trade was fairish.'

'Didn't I tell you he was a close un.'

'He wouldn't part,' said the sponger.

'He's not such a fool as he looks,' commented another.

'In my opinion,' said Sam, in a spirit of confidence tempered with deference, 'he's a long way even from looking like a fool.'

'He was straight with "Fairation" there,' remarked one observant soaker.

'I'd warm his nut,' said 'Fairation,' sulkily.

'Nay,' said Sam; 'he's not big, bud he's all there. I took the measure on him, as pritty a built little chap as iver I clapped eyes on. I should wonder if there's a fellow here could punish him. I'd advise thee, "Fairation," to measure a man afore thou talks o' leatherin' him. No, what I allus say,' added Sam, magnanimously, 'is live an' let live. I don't like your style, putting on a chap because he's a stranger.'

'Correct,' agreed 'Fairation's' critic.

The argument continued. It is unnecessary to follow it here, but to return to our traveller, none other than Master Ephraim—his only disguise 'the hair about his face,' and a kerchief much affected by fisher folks.

Ephraim loitered in the town until the lamps were lit. Afterwards he took the Willowby Road. When he reached the lane which led up to Farmer Cowlamb's house he hesitated a moment or two, the audacity of his enterprise breaking upon him. He had come determined to see Iphis, to persuade her to elope with him. Should he return now, and have it to dwell upon afterwards, this purposeless journey? This decided him. If Iphis cared a rush for him, if she 'hated' old Long, she would yield. He was tolerably sanguine, Iphis would be impulsive enough for anything; taken suddenly, she would be more likely to take the leap. The stars came out, the moon shone down upon him encouragingly, a few clouds drifted across her

face, then all was clear again. It was a night for a lover's bold stroke.

> And in such a night
> Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well;
> Stealing her soul with many vows of faith.

He braced himself to his undertaking. He knew the early hours of the farm, and that if he wished to speak to Iphis it must be by attracting her in some way after all the household had retired. If he only was certain of her window—then there was the risk of frightening her. Ephraim's manœuvres approaching the house savoured of melodrama. He listened, stepped on cautiously. He was in some fear of the dog. What dog is more suspicious than the old shepherd dog. He had gone to the house in broad daylight, and the old dog had shown no inimical feeling, but prowling round when all honest folk should be in bed was sufficient in itself to raise canine suspicions. He climbed over the hedge into the seed field, and at once felt his heart jump into his mouth. But he had only

dropped upon the back of a recumbent sheep, which, bolting suddenly from under him, left him prone, her neighbours at the same time starting off with startled jumps.

A light was burning in a window—that must be her room. Some one was moving about. The light had a strange will-'o-the-wisp appearance. He advanced stealthily to the iron hurdles, and just as he reached them the light went out. He stood some time undecided. It was possible that this might not be Iphis's window. What a catastrophe if he made the mistake! His mind was considerably exercised at the dilemma he was in, but eventually he scaled the hurdles and tiptoed over the plot of garden ground to reach the path by the house wall. He must make the plunge, right or wrong. Stooping, he felt about for loose gravel; but there seemed a dearth of it, so he had to content himself with a handful of soil. There was no answer, although it caught the glass. He tried again. The window-sash went up smartly.

'Heigh!' remonstrated a voice angrily, electrifying Ephraim. It was Farmer Cowlamb's window he had got to after all. He crept close to the house wall, and almost held his breath. He could hear conversation.

'All fancy; it's that owd nest's a tumbling down.'

The sash was smartly slided down. Ephraim ran quickly along the house side, scrambled through the shrubs, and, hearing a low growl, quickened his flight over the hurdles and through the scurrying sheep in the field. It was useless, it was hazardous, experimenting on any other window that night. He cursed himself for his stupidity. Had he not seen Iphis framed in the window at the end of the house only last summer? He had made signals to her there. He must not stay the night in Moortown, some one would be sure to recognise him. He tried to think of some other plan of seeing Iphis, but his brain failed him. He saw no other course open to him but a second experiment.

'I'll have my hoss in,' said Ephraim, looking in at the doorway of the hostelry.

'To be sure, sir,' returned the landlord. 'Then you an't got your bit o' business done?'

'No,' returned Ephraim, curtly.

'Shall you be comin' by agean? It is not my business—— bud I shall be glad if you put up here again; good entertainment for man an' beast, makin' so bold. If I hadn't at home, there's my lads——'

'Oh, for that matter, I'm used to hosses,' said Ephraim.

'Dal—I thowt you was.'

Ephraim looked at the landlord narrowly; he held the lantern high for Ephraim to see his way out. Ephraim urged the mare on, as if anxious to be in Treminster before the inns closed; but once out of the town, he reined up, and let the mare go at a walking pace. What use was it going to Treminster if he could get in anywhere else on the road? He had to consider his finances. To make

doubly sure of himself he dived deep down into his capacious pocket for his purse—a 'stattus' purchased article, now much debilitated, the marks of bronze coin unmistakably impressed on the flaccid leather. After touching it he had a more comfortable feeling. He might have lost it. Usually so careless, he was cautious to a surprising degree. He began to think that his money had surmounted many risks—doubtful company, his scramble over the hedge and fall, his flight through the shrubs. He counted his money, and gained confidence in himself.

He had to turn out occasionally for homecoming vehicles. He met a heavy waggon. Ephraim wished to know how far to Treminster.

'If t'art dry, thou'll ha' to go quick, or they'll be closed at Cowslip.'

'How far?'

'Two mile away.'

Ephraim pushed along. He might stop there, even if he had to share the stable with

his horse. He was excessively cautious. He wished to frame some legitimate excuse for stopping at Cowslip, perversely determined to be a Simon Pure of travellers. After a time he got out of the cart, and with his pocket knife and a stone, knocked off the nail points round a hoof. It was an easy matter then to loosen a shoe.

The sleepy landlord, candle in hand, was barring the door.

'I want to put up—there's no blacksmith about, and my hoss has cast a shoe.'

'All decent folks are i' bed by this.'

'I want to put up.'

'My missis has gone to bed,' still demurred the innkeeper. 'Ya don't want no vittles? My missis is particular about me rummagin' about in her dairy. If you can turn in to my lad?'

The landlord got a lantern, the horse was stalled, and Ephraim obtained some ale.

'Am I to pay now?' asked Ephraim.

'No, we'll not bother to-night. I'll be up in the morning—never fear.'

When Ephraim got to bed he debated how he should get over the following day. He lay late, and dawdled over his breakfast. He was in no hurry having the horse's shoe replaced. Some draught horses were being shod all round, and Ephraim waited his turn complacently.

'Not a soul goes down Dungeon Lane, and it's rank wi' gress,' said a burly waggoner.

There were grievances in this village. The high-handed farmers would not suffer the villagers to graze their cows in the lanes, their plea, their ditches and their hedges suffering. 'An' that's where the tenter allus took poor folks's cows, an' they was niver seen till milking time. 'Tis as smooth as a table, an' like a long gress paddock.'

Ephraim had no difficulty in discovering Dungeon Lane. The lane was exquisite. Talls thorns in flower hid him from view. A

boy in a grass field came and peeped curiously at him, and seemed in no hurry to resume his occupation. By-and-by Ephraim elicited the information that the lad was pulling 'yac-yars,' and stubbing thistles. Horses ran in the field. 'Yacyars,' could be kept down by sheep, the lad remarked.

The day was a tedious one to Ephraim, but he enjoyed it. The boy left his work and went home. Ephraim began to think of returning to Moortown, for he began to feel hungry. A roll and a morsel of cheese had satisfied his cravings for a time. He began to lead the mare on slowly, allowing her to graze at intervals. He wished for twilight over and over again; his eye had wandered over the old mare's body, detecting every blemish, every sign of decay. He had thus occupied himself as one way of killing time. Looking for birds' nests was a variation. He found 'yellowhammers,' or 'goolies' as he knew them, robins and linnets, peggy-white-throats, and he scrambled up to the beautiful

nest of a 'pink,' and he startled himself once with placing his hand on the back of a sitting blackbird.

Though the time passed slowly, Ephraim noted cloudlets rising in the east from off the sea, and floating wildly across the expanse. The sun sank gloomily, and a cool wind got up. Ephraim's mind was divided between satisfaction and the fear of a too tempestuous night.

At last he started for Moortown. He was better satisfied with the landlord's manner. Sam asked no questions, accepting his customer as a *bona-fide* traveller, conducting him through the taproom into his snug, a small room about ten feet square. There Ephraim refreshed the inner man, his eyes resting on a tremendous display of horses, cheap prints and vilest daubs. He did not hurry away from there ; he reasoned that he must not be too early. At last stepping out into the night, he with difficulty saw his way. The sky was heavily overcast—there were no

twinkling stars. The wind was gusty, and when it sank one was conscious of desultory raindrops. He was up at the farm-house a little earlier, determined to watch for Iphis's light. He had no morbid fears this time of casualty or failure. The darkness of the night was his surest ally. At the foot of the lane he noted that several of the lower windows were illuminated. Had old Long arrived ? He concluded that the illumination was in honour of the old reprobate, and this added zest to Ephraim's adventure. A light appeared in a bed-room window—though the lights below were not extinguished. He saw Iphis come to the window, then after a time her light disappeared. He dare not discover himself until the lights below were extinguished and the house was wrapped in darkness. He waited patiently. At last he thought that he might venture. He threw some soil at the window and whispered her name. He had to repeat the experiment.

'Ephraim?' he heard her inquire above him. 'Oh, go away. You'll have father hear you,' she whispered, warningly.

'Has the owd man come?'

'Yis,' said Iphis, faintly.

'Are you dressed?'

'I haven't got all my things off,' answered Iphis, naïvely.

It was all carried on in whispers. Ephraim lowered his voice still more.

'Can tha come down outside?'

'I dursn't,' said Iphis.

'You must,' declared Ephraim commandingly. 'Put something on your head, and a good thick shawl, it blows cowd.'

'I'll come,' said Iphis, relenting.

She stole down in her stockings, boots and hat and shawl rolled up under her arm. She was but a few moments whispering to the old dog. She slipped out of the scullery door. Ephraim awaited her in the lane, out of earshot of the house.

'So thou'rt goin' to wed owd Long wi'out

makin' any bones about it,' began he, without any tremor in his voice.

Iphis took it as a reproach. Her voice shook as she replied, 'I'm forced.'

'Nay, thou hadn't,' disputed he.

'I am,' declared she with temper, 'an' you—I wonder at ye coming. You knew all about it; and how you durst come after running away agean. I paid for you not to go to prison first time.'

'Thou paid——' gasped Ephraim. Here was a revelation. He had all along imagined that Mrs. Towse had found the money. It was an obligation that he honestly intended to remember. 'I thowt it was Towse's.'

'An' you oughtn't to come when you can do no good,' sobbed she. 'What did ye come for?' demanded she, bitterly.

'For thou,' replied Ephraim tenderly conciliative, 'an' thou'rt a dele ower good for me.' He could not bring his mind to surmount her great unselfishness.

'Iphis——,' said he, placing his arm about

her neck and drawing her to him, kissing her with more true gentleness than ever he had shown before, 'I come o' purpose for thee; I've got horse and cart at Moortown, hoss all harnessed ready—now, is it to be me or owd Long?'

'I dursn't go, Ephraim!'

'Dursn't!' echoed he, releasing her a little, then relinquishing her. 'I see, you're fonder o' owd Long's'——

He was about to say money, but remembered her confession, and restrained himself. He moved away a step or two.

'Well, it was good o' you gettin' one out o' trouble. Then I mun go back wi'out you.'

He was moving away; all hesitation left her, she followed him, clinging to him.

'Oh, Ephraim, don't—don't leave me.'

'I must. I can't stop here.'

'I'll go, Ephraim,' declared she, excitedly, 'but I must ha' some things to put on.'

'Is that a warm shawl?'

'Yes.'

'You've got a pair o' boots on? Then come as you are. If thou goes back into the house thou'll be wackenin' some on 'em. If t'art cowd I'll wrap the hoss rug about thee.'

'How much money have you, Ephraim?' asked she, with a touch of her old dad's prudence.

'Lots,' said Ephraim, with laconic cheerfulness.

'I've got two sovereigns if my purse is in this pocket——oh, it is,' added she with relief.

'Whoo!' cried Ephraim exultantly, in the excess of his joy embracing her fervidly. 'Come on, lass; owd Long 'll swear i' the morning.'

Iphis so far recovered her spirits as to emit a little low laugh of malicious delight.

They scarcely exchanged a word passing down the dark lane, only once Iphis complaining somewhat ruefully of the darkness of the night. Ephraim gently grasped her arm to give her confidence, perhaps he was a little

fearful lest she should lose heart and turn back. He did not know the sense of relief that had come to her. Now she had taken the plunge she had no thought of retracing her steps.

'Art tha cowd?' asked Ephraim at last, the sight of a gas lamp at the outskirts of the town breaking in upon the dreary walk.

'No, not a bit. How far have we to go?'

'I left the hoss at the Habro' Arms.'

'Why, that's——. I dursn't go in. It is a queer street, that.'

'I couldn't put up anywhere else. You can wait outside while I bring the cart out.'

'I dursn't stand out there by mysen, at them cross roads awiver.'

'You can stand at the house end. It's gittin' so late—it's striking eleven now, hark!—by we get there, they'll all be turned out.'

'I'm glad o' that,' responded Iphis, thankfully.

'I come last night, and got to the wrong window,' said Ephraim with a laugh.

'I know,' laughed Iphis, 'father's.'

'Did you know it was me?'

'Not then. After, I wondered—there was foot-prints—I heard you.'

'I'm glad he spoke first,' confessed Ephraim, with a sigh of relief.

Iphis muffled her face, the gas lamps would reveal her to any chance passer-by. As she glanced up at her companion, she gave a little cry, but it was one of pleased or amused surprise.

'Why, Ephraim, you've got whiskers.'

For a moment he was taken aback, as if he had been taxed with some depravity. Forgetful, his hand started to his face, then he began to laugh a little shamefacedly.

'They're false—I put 'em on as we were coming down the lane. I should ha' been fon out last night but for them.'

'Oh, oh, oh,' Iphis's shrill laugh echoing under the lamps.

'Hush!' whispered Ephraim, with the caution of a melodramatic succourer of distressed damsels.

'You needn't ha' been frightened; blacksmith came up to father, and father said if he was him he wouldn't bother after you, and the blacksmith said he wouldn't.'

'Bud you said you wondered how I dare come back——' said Ephraim, tenaciously.

'You took me so unawares,' said she, confusedly. 'I—— I thought you'd gone away an' never meant to see me any more.'

'Bah, I went off o' purpose,' said Ephraim, complacently; 'we'll be married to-morrow. I put th' banns up i' Haveluck Owd Church.'

'But they've niver been put up in ours,' debated Iphis, aghast at such effrontery.

'Well,' returned Ephraim, coolly, 'who wanted to be asked there? Who knows owt about you i' Haveluck? Nobody as goes to th' Owd Church. There mud be a dozen Iphis Cowlambs i' Haveluck. I went to hear 'em mysen. They're all swells as goes there, an'

they just looked at me as if the other churches were for sich as me. An' th' owd fellow's lost his teeth—I'm blowed if I could tell a word he said.'

'I don't think it 'll do,' said Iphis, timidly. She remembered reading a notice in Willowby Church porch of the penalties for false declaration.

'Oh, leave it all to me,' said Ephraim, confidently.

A policeman stood at the dreaded cross; he seemed to give colour to her timidity. Insensibly she crept closer to Ephraim. That danger—to her—over, she had to wait outside. She shivered with excitement and the suspense of the few moments.

Oh, how relieved she was when Ephraim came out of the inn yard leading his horse! He helped her in, Sam, the landlord, shouting after him:—

'Safe journey to ye, mister. Straight on, an' first turn to your left. It's as gain as t'other way, an' less turns. Yes, sir.'

The policeman turned his bull's eye upon them, but both Iphis and Ephraim were too busy settling themselves to take much heed of him. Only Iphis looking behind her, and seeing the silent figure still standing there, crept closer to her lover.

What a journey it was! For all Iphis was perturbed by the gloomy character of their journey and the way in which she had left her home, she was soon completely carried away with Ephraim's exhilaration. They laughed loudly and boisterously at the discomfiture of Mr. Long—Ephraim not sparing that worthy, holding him up to such ridicule that Iphis felt she would have died of shame had she married him. Her conscience only smote her that she had left no line behind to set her father's mind at rest; he might get it into his head that she had destroyed herself. She mentioned this to Ephraim in some concern. He passed it off lightly.

'Thou can write to 'em *after* we get married.'

Their conversation waxed very grave and serious. She was to stay with some people whose cleanliness Ephraim extolled. Iphis felt a little grateful for his forethought. She was a little afraid of her name being bandied about.

'You see,' said she, 'folks will talk. You have no relations to feel put out about you.'

'No,' answered Ephraim, thankfully; then he recollected himself. 'Poor Bob. He went down with that great ship. There wasn't a man saved, not one. The captain and officers all drownded. It turned ower, bottom up'ard. It was top-heavy, they say.' And Ephraim, feeling some moisture at his eyes, passed the back of his hand across them.

CHAPTER 34.

A QUIET WEDDING.

'Go back with me to Snailhorn, Whitaker?'

'Can't; I've a wedding at ten.'

'A wedding? Phew! Get one of those curates to come. I thought you would go home with me—there's a bottle of the '34 left.

'It's a temptation—that.'

Two old men sat at a breakfast table—two old men of the old, old school, and both parsons—you could hardly call them clergymen. One so fat and fleshy and hillocky about the face—that vulgarly he was termed 'swine-chapped' by the irreverent. He was vicar of Haveluck. The other, his antithesis, thin and white, his scant hair brushed down upon his forehead, but his eyes bright and

active as a water rat's, his gestures and his features full of vivacity. We see in him Iphis's friend, the rector of Snailhorn. Two extremes had met. Parson Whitaker was over six feet high, our old Snailhorn friend but few inches over five ; while the Snailhorn rector enjoyed the reputation of a liberal mind, heart, and purse, the Haveluck vicar was reputed close and mean to a disagreeable degree. Between his servants and him there waged an incessant warfare ; they were always leaving him ; he had to endure abominable discomfort. Only his old parish clerk could get along with him, and they quarrelled frequently. With his parish and the local powers Whitaker was continually at loggerheads. About gravel pits, about his church, wherever there was a possibility of asserting himself he availed himself of the opportunity, and fought it out to the bitter end. Seldom he won his causes. His bills of costs had been frightful. Once, twice, thrice, had he to leave his parish to recruit his temper and his purse. He would not

live in Haveluck hard set. Each time he departed the inhabitants foolishly congratulated themselves that the old man had taken his final leave of them. Each time they were deceived. He returned fresh as a daisy and as combative as a crow. He had actually shown the cantankerous spirit that ruled him in his dealings with his bishop. Mr. Whitaker's age and infirmities excited the bishop's concern. Tenderly solicitous, his Lordship advised his dear friend to retire. Mr. Whitaker's reply was terse and of the nature of an equivoque.

'My lord, there is the same sauce for the goose as the gander.'

Whitaker's tenacity always excited the risibilities of his friend from Snailhorn. Probably their dissimilarity of character made them faster friends. Whitaker was one of the oldest men in Haveluck, and had held the living ever since he took priest's orders, and Gerlimore had gone to Snailhorn a young man. Whitaker in dress and character looked

the pragmatical old parson, while Gerlimore had the appearance of a refined old gentleman farmer of sporting tastes.

'You can go after it's over,' suggested Gerlimore.

'I don't know, Gerlimore—my curate's taking his holiday. I don't want to be beholden to those other fellows. I won't have any singing through the nose, no walking backward, no antics. Such things were not in vogue in our young days, eh, Gerlimore? Every man hunted if he could keep a nag. There's hue and cry now if a parson's seen on horseback. My parish clerk—they do without one in these new churches——. Ah, Acaster! any objection?'

'No, sir,' said the clerk, 'I wanted your surplice.'

'Surplice? No, I'm not going to put on another—the last will do very well. They are only common people.'

'Objection,' said Gerlimore, 'do you have people come and forbid the banns?'

'No, only Acaster thought there was something scarcely right, the fellow seemed so undecided when he gave the names in.'

Mr. Whitaker's voice was terrible to the small boys of his parish, it was so loud. Those with whom reverence was not a virtue styled him 'Owd Whit.'

'Curious name, the woman's, but we have some curious names in the town. Close upon the sea a quantity of foreign people settle. Ah! Gerlimore, how the place has grown since you and I went fleeting. There were plenty of ducks then, now I scarcely ever see one.'

'Why, from these windows things look pretty much the same; trees have grown maybe.'

'Ah, Acaster,' shouted Whitaker, throwing up the window sash, seeing his clerk plodding out of the gateway, what is that curious name?'

'Iphis Cowlamb,' shouted the clerk, without turning his head.

'Iphis!' exclaimed Parson Gerlimore, dropping his knife and fork.

'Iphis,' repeated Mr. Whitaker; 'have you heard it before?'

'Yes,' returned Gerlimore, confusedly.

Mr. Whitaker gave a groan.

'I haven't done with it yet; it's in my foot.'

'I'll marry them if you like——'

'No, no.'

'But I will, Whitaker.'

'No, no.'

'Whitaker, I should take it as a favour.'

'Oh, marry them, then; you perhaps haven't many in your parish?'

'We don't average one a year.'

'Happy man! There were three yesterday morning; it is a morning's work here sometimes in some of the churches. As soon as the spring comes in they begin, and many of them would come to be unmarried if they could before the summer is over. But the churches on Thorrock's ground are the most

favoured, and the Methodies. We shall have them here shortly, keen as mustard.'

'Oh, I won't have it said I kept them waiting,' said Gerlimore, cheerfully.

Mr. Gerlimore was in the church a few minutes before the appointed hour.

Either the wedding had not got wind, he thought, or marriages did not excite much curiosity or interest in Haveluck. At last he saw Iphis come into the church, and something like nervousness affected him. He knew how ridiculous it was, but a feeling of regret coursed through his old veins. Some self-questioning mentally obtruded, which he put away with an authoritative 'Pish!' Then he was anxiously wondering. Was the girl doing well! But he knew something of the gossip of his own neighbourhood. It had leaked out that Long was secretly planning a change in his establishment. Ah, what was the meaning of Cowlamb's visits, Long's journeys away from home. The old man in his dotage was to marry this girl! It was

evident that she was escaping the old reprobate. He had not been wrong in surmising that the girl had her troubles. He recollected that he had given her a promise to help her if she needed help. Ah, well, she was most likely to be taken with a young fellow. What sort of a fellow was he? Mr. Gerlimore, moved by such reveries, studiously carried himself that Iphis should not recognise him, but he glanced furtively at the bridegroom-elect. Rather a reckless look in the lad's face, but some *bonhomie* and great good nature and unselfishness. They were two natures likely to go well together. Gerlimore hoped for the best.

'Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God——'

Iphis visibly started, staring with a frightened look into the clergyman's face. She would have staggered back but for Ephraim.

'Don't be alarmed, my dear,' interpolated Mr. Gerlimore, reassuringly, and went on with his reading. She went through her part like

an automaton, feeling as if in a dream. When in the vestry, Mr. Gerlimore spoke most kindly and comfortingly, yet with a spice of glee.

'Did I not say I would help you if you came to me? I have helped you, haven't I?' murmured he, chuckling and touching Iphis under the chin.

Iphis recovered herself, signing her name in bold, if somewhat sprawling characters; but she was nervous to an hysterical point. Ephraim's signature might have been a hieroglyphic of Sennacherib's time, his manual was as perplexing as arrowheads. Iphis faintly mentioned something about 'lines.'

'Yes, yes, my dear, you shall have them. Wait a moment.'

He took Ephraim aside and looked at him sternly. 'Young man! do you know what you have done?'

It was now Ephraim's turn to feel aghast.

'Can you keep a wife?' demanded Mr. Gerlimore, still stern.

'I can addle thirty shillings a week,' stammered Ephraim, relieved that it was no worse, but at a loss to account for such pertinent queries.

'Have you anything beforehand, eh? You can't live on air. You know what your wife has been used to, sirrah?' Gerlimore's face was hard, but some mirth was only stayed at his throat.

'I won't give *you* anything,' declared he, a slip of oblong paper in his hand, soiled with much contact. 'Here, take this.'

Ephraim looked so vacant and ignorant, Gerlimore began to feel a little contempt for him.

'It's a bank-note, man, for five pounds,' snapped the Snailhorn rector. 'Haven't you seen one before.'

'No, sir,' stammered Ephraim.

Gerlimore turned away from him, his sharp, pinched face having now a look of care and anxiety. He busied himself filling in for Iphis a copy of her 'lines.'

'God bless you, my dear,' said Gerlimore, tremulously speaking to Iphis in a low voice. 'Your father doesn't know of this?'

'No, sir.' Iphis's voice was faint and supplicatory

'Humph! it is very bad.'

'I'm going to write to him, sir.'

Mr. Gerlimore shook his head despondently. 'Better not. Leave it to me; I will do so.'

Iphis would have thanked him, but he turned his back upon her; the wedding party leaving the vestry with serious faces, the other pair, a fisherman and his sweetheart, much mystified. Iphis and Ephraim walked down the aisle too much occupied with their own thoughts to exchange a word with each other. They proceeded some distance down the road before either spoke. At last Iphis turned to Ephraim.

'Mr. Gerlimore, what did he say to you? What did he give you?—Money?' questioned she with sudden insight.

'Yes,' returned Ephraim, reluctantly. He did not know whether he ought to feel ashamed or gratified. Iphis's manner was vague and stern. 'Five pounds!'

'You oughtn't to have taken it, Ephraim.'

'I didn't ask him for it.'

'We'll pay him back, Ephraim?'

'Yes, we'll pay him back,' assented Ephraim, easily swayed.

'I shan't write to father, Ephraim.'

'Why?' asked he in surprise. 'I think I would. You know they'll wonder if owt's happened to ye.'

'Mr. Gerlimore said I'd better not. I shouldn't know what to say,' confessed she without shame, 'and he said he would.'

'I wondered what he was mumblin' about,' said Ephraim. 'He's a good owd sort,' acknowledged he with hopeful confidence.

'Don't you reckon too much,' advised she, sharply.

'I hadn't reckoned o' owt,' said Ephraim,

resignedly. 'I know your faither niver mattered me, an' I'se think he niver will. I don't know whether he can't ha' me locked up ower this job.'

'He wouldn't do that, Ephraim.'

'I'm not so sure,' said Ephraim, gravely. Ephraim was a victim to the impotence of his mind. He was humble, careless, thoughtful, hopeful, resigned, reckless, and at last almost bitter. Never through all did he forget her father's character and nature.

'I shan't go back unless father sends for me,' said Iphis, soothingly; 'if we do go you'll ha' to humour father.'

'I'll not say my soul's my own,' declared Ephraim, emphatically.

She scarcely anticipated such a revulsion in her father's mood as sending for them. She had little faith in any good effect from Mr. Gerlimore's representations. Her father would be sulky and resentful. He would consider himself disgraced before Mr. Long and the neighbourhood, independently of the

mortification of having been outwitted. The jade to be plotting while pretending to be pliant! She could picture her father, his huge frame disturbed, striding about the farm in the worst of tempers, in the house maintaining an obstinate silence, his lower lip projecting and an angry light in his eye. She could imagine the condemnation he would mete out to offenders, scathing bitterness in sparse words. And as she conjured up this picture her heart sank. Mr. Gerlimore might write again and again. She believed that her father had almost hated Ephraim. He would detest him now. And somehow, looking at her husband, she felt herself regarding him with a much less romantic vision. She did not regret the step she had taken. But was not Ephraim somewhat commonplace? He was not shrewd, like her father or her brothers. She thought of Sam, poor Sam. Ephraim was shallow, easily amused, easily led away. He had no grave and settled purpose about him. What he did do was always actuated by

sudden impulse. She could almost foresee the war there would be should her father consider to recall her and provide for them. Ephraim's ways would not be Farmer Cowlamb's ways. He would be like a thoughtless lad, always getting into scrapes and committing himself in some inconsiderate, foolish way. She could not see before her a very cheerful prospect, if her father did go so far as to recollect that she was still his daughter.

CHAPTER 35.

A DEATH.

Picture to yourself the consternation at Willowby. Farmer Cowlamb, rising early as was his wont, Mrs. Cowlamb following the precept of her lord—two hours in the morn were worth the worst half of the day—the servant of all work roused earlier than usual; Mr. Long receiving a premonitory tap at his door, some grace allowed him; Iphis, too, having a little license accorded her this morning. A remonstrative summons at Iphis's door later on—no answer—entrance through the unlocked door to discover a bed not slept in, the window even open, and then the servant girl to testify to having found the

house door free to any comer. Some fear took possession of Cowlamb. What had the foolish lass done—drowned herself? No; there was no open well about, no stream within a mile. He could not conceive any other dreadful resource. God forgive him if he had left her no other way of escape. Was she hiding? She must be searched for high and low. Had she taken flight? She must be followed and brought back. But where had she gone, which way had she taken?

With sickening dread he looked into the outhouses, calling Iphis, confidently, with less hope, despairingly. But he would confess his fears to none. He walked in and about, round the house; there were footprints; his lips closed tightly, the nether one shot forward; a gleam of rage started into his eye; the whole thing flashed upon him. She had gone, she had disgraced herself, made him ridiculous. He might have cursed her, vowed her to perpetual poverty and unforgiveness, but his lips did not move. He

walked into the house, if crestfallen, no longer possessed with terror and alarm.

'You needn't look for her,' raged he; 'she is gone! Bad 'll come on her.'

'Where has she gone?' whined Mrs. Cowlamb, lachrymose, but with a tearfulness not arising from the tenderest emotions of a mother's breast. In her way she was as much put out as her lord.

'As she makes her bed she'll lig on it,' said Farmer Cowlamb, relentlessly.

No entreaty for forgiveness came from Mrs. Cowlamb's lips. Iphis might have been a shepherd dog convicted of worrying.

Poor Cowlamb! the consolations of his hard profession did not occur to him. Religion had nothing at all to do with it. He had hoped to raise sons and daughter out of the mire, and this was the sequel. Brought up rudely, narrowly, he only recognised the virtue of straightforward purpose. He believed implicitly in the world hereafter; he believed no rogue would be suffered in that

Eternal City whose gates even were a temptation, where gems were as common as flints on the road. It was a hard matter for him to reconcile himself to fools and the improvident receiving any consideration in that quarter. A very material faith was Farmer Cowlamb's. Those who got on in the world legitimately, without breath of slander—who worshipped on the Sabbath, tabooing newspapers and wordly concerns—they were the people elect. Such a religion was not calculated to cope with any great disappointment or reverse. Not for one moment had he considered that there was any sin or shame in an unequal marriage. Did not his Bible abound with examples of patriarchs consorting with young maidens—marrying and giving in marriage? The parent was not said nay. The maiden of the Bible was one submissive, unquestioning, and acquiescent.

Mr. Long, apprised of the startling information, whimpered like an aggrieved child, as he hurriedly shuffled into his clothes,

bustling out of his room to stand on the landing, leaning on his stick, looking over the handrail disconsolate and helpless. Who was to come and help him? Cowlamb had come and told him and left him again. Mr. Long almost feared Cowlamb now. Cowlamb's face was so full of rage and dogged temper, well might the nervous, tottering old man tremble.

'Heigh, Cowlamb!' whimpered Mr. Long, entreatingly. 'I say, Cowlamb!'

Mr. Long judged that in the turmoil he was forgotten. He did not wonder so much at that.

Cowlamb would not have minded much Mr. Long breaking his neck on the staircase: but the looks of the thing acted as a corrective. He was fain to go and help his disconsolate guest down.

'It's a pritty piece of business this!' complained Mr. Long. 'I'm suer, Cowlamb, I made her reight. The lawyer's to be here at ten. What's to be done wi' him?'

'It's a fool's errand him coming now,' retorted Cowlamb, viciously.

'That nephy——'

'Blast that nephy!' interrupted Cowlamb hotly. He felt that that sing-song now could be dispensed with. Forgetting years of grace, he was a Pharisee no longer. A bit of the real old Adam showed itself.

'Heigh, Cowlamb, heigh! blast him,' echoed Mr. Long fervidly, roused into more cheerfulness, 'he's a parson fellow an' all. He thinks he'll roy away when I'm gone——'

Cowlamb was easier when Mr. Long, a little later, expressed a desire to 'get' home. Cowlamb was thankful that there had been some reticence throughout *à propos* of this marriage; it had been felt rather than acknowledged that a quiet wedding was preferable. Not even the farmer's surviving son had been informed. This was because Cowlamb had been fearful lest some inconsiderate word from him should countenance Iphis's opposition.

But the rumour was stirring, partly through the Towses. The morning even was conjectured. At Willowby gossips waited, not leaving door or window for many minutes together. But a messenger apprised the Willowby curate that the wedding was deferred, and the gossips were left in a state of uncertainty and ill-humour. It may seem an anachronism Chapel folks patronising the Church ; but Farmer Cowlamb himself looked on a chapel marriage dubiously, Iphis as less dignified, and Mr. Long prided himself on being born and bred Church of England.

Farmer Cowlamb had not the patience to give Mr. Long a version of the catastrophe that he could understand, nor grace sufficient to soften the blow. It fell to Mrs. Cowlamb, still most dismal, to make some sort of an explanation to the old man, which her husband listened to and yet flouted with impatience and increasing temper.

'D—— such like jokers,' cried old Long,

with quivering lip. 'I say, Cowlamb, I mun git home and make no bones about it. I'm suer, Cowlamb, I made her reight.'

'To be suer, Mr. Long,' condoled Mrs. Cowlamb. 'If she thinks she's goin' to wheedle round me, she'll find out she's saddled the wrong horse. You'll ha' to take Miss Grinstead on agean, Mr. Long?'

'Heigh, heigh, mem, she'll be glad enow, I'll uphold her. Who else would have the poor owd creatur',' said Mr. Long, with some complaisance. 'She's hardlins worth her keep, and nobody would have her to look at —ower far gone in the tooth.'

People talked as they will talk. A servant girl and half-a-dozen busybodies will circulate scandal sufficient for a country-side's delectation. The farmer moved about his farm and to market, busying himself more than ever. He hated the house now more than before. He was not a man to sit down and give up. The process of converting dull earth into choicer metal—a transmutation taxing the

old alchemists—gave a zest to his life. He went to market, and was impervious to wagging tongues. Ill-counselled or unguarded ones met with sharp retort. Who had more biting sarcasm and cynical ready wit than Farmer Cowlamb. Besides, he was broad of back, hard-limbed, and lithe. He might be a little stiffer in his joints than he was ten years ago; still, if he could not throw the hammer so far as a younger man would, he could throw the man who threw the hammer.

Weeks passed, but they passed slowly with Cowlamb. He felt his heart hungering. The means of satisfaction were at hand, but the first step was bitter indeed. She did not write asking for mercy or forgiveness. He read a letter again and again, but it was from Snailhorn, from Mr. Gerlimore. He would have wondered what Mr. Gerlimore had to do with it; only, the letter distinctly stated that he had married the runaways. Pretty trick on a parent that—and a clergyman, who

ought to preach obedience to children, not further them in their wilfulness. Moreover, an old neighbour, who had professed friendship over and over again. He saw that the girl was in some trouble months ago. Iphis had confided in him. He had told Iphis that he would write. What occasion had he to forestall Iphis writing, taking the initial step out of her hands. He had a proud stomach, had Cowlamb. If he wrote to her or went to her, it would look as if he felt that he was vanquished. If she wrote humbly, and he replied or went to her, it would seem as if he could take her communication as a sign of penitence. But if he went without a supplication, what airs and graces the jade would take upon herself.

Cowlamb did not read Mr. Gerlimore's letter to his wife. He was not afraid of leaving it about, for Mrs. Cowlamb was wont to confess humbly that she could 'nobbut read a bit i' th' New Testament.' She could not wield a pen or decipher manuscript. But

Cowlamb, of determined will, had acquired this accomplishment. Mrs. Cowlamb made her mark at her wedding, and ambition never stirred her after.

Cowlamb was not a man to visit public houses, only 'times by occasions,' as he put it—that was, when other people considered settlement of business necessitated an adjournment there. A market day at Moortown he went into the 'pig market house,' so named among the jobbers, otherwise in gilded letters high above, the 'Chumley Arms.' Some one mentioned him by name.

'Cowlamb!' echoed an elderly man.

Cowlamb's ears were on the alert.

'Be that Farmer Cowlamb?'

But Cowlamb pretended not to hear, either out of sheer perverseness, which was one of his traits, or suspicious that he was only to hearken to something ill-advised. For the staple of conversation was a jumble of bargaining, one among another—attempts of the

vendor to set the mind of the vendee at rest with extravagant encomium.

'I say, art thou Cowlamb? A lass o' thine took shift wi' a lad. Thou didn't like it, eh? I'll have a word wi' thee by-an'-by.'

'I want no words,' said Cowlamb, 'good or bad.'

'What's all th' bother about, Cowlamb?' continued the unabashed. 'What, art thou settin' thysen abun thy nabour? Thou'rt one, I'se think, that would ha' th' world in a band. Sich blash!'

'I wonder what ya've got to do wi' it,' said Cowlamb, curtly, deeply incensed but controlling himself, rising too to drink off his glass and get away. It was a disagreeable thing having a family broil touched on in public company.

'Nay, man, sit down, I've summuts to say,' continued his cauteriser with emphasis; 'we mayn't part bad friends. Sit down an' have a glass wi' me—here, landlady!'

'I can pay for what I drink—mysen,' returned Cowlamb, thanklessly.

'Isn't there other folks that can?'

'If you've owt to say to me, I'll hear it outside, if ye like—not here.'

'Nay, nay; there's room by me. I hadn't goin' to stir out. I been up o' legs all day, Coom here an' bring your glass.'

Cowlamb hesitated. He did not want to sit by the man if he had nothing but twaddle to deliver himself of. Cowlamb had some knowledge of his persecutor; he was a jobber, owned some rich marsh land, was known as a safe man, bought and sold largely, and was considered fully warm enough to overset a bad season. A man entitled to some respect, therefore Cowlamb gave way. Cowlamb had not an inviting countenance. However, it did not disturb his neighbour's good humour.

'I've heerd about it, Cowlamb. Thou didn't matter that blacksmith's lad bein' sweet on thy dowter.'

'If that's all you've got to say I'm off

an' away. Ower an' ower agean, I'm sick on it.'

The jobber's eyes twinkled.

'I can match my pound agean thine onyhow.'

Cowlamb looked somewhat incredulous, somewhat inquiringly. He would not jump too suddenly at any bait. He muttered gruffly—

'Why, what's he to do wi' you?'

'Not much, bud he's the nearest relation I've got, Cowlamb. It's a bit way round. My sister's dowter had a couple o'baens. One on 'em got drownded at sea, th' lad I'd ha' made a man on ; but no, nowt but salt watter stuck in his throat.'

'Why didn't you look better efter them?'

'Hay? I hadn't goin' to strip my nest to line theirs.'

'I mean th' lads.'

'I don't believe in making fowts[1] o' baens. Look here, Cowlamb, that sister o' mine's been dead this thotty year. She went and

[1] Helpless, useless beings.

married a smooth-tongued fellow I reckoned a pawdawdles, an' I niver did forgive her; leastways she died wi'out forgiving me. Bud I was as hard as flint then. I begin to see a bit better now, when that's all past mending. It was little I knew o' what she left behind her. She married a labouring man. Lord forgi' me that I was so hard. Cowlamb there was nobbut two on us. If I could eat them words I said to her when she teld me she was going to be married, I'd give half I've got. I'm not sartin suer whither I shall see her i' the next world to ask her pardon, for maybe they don't let us rave up such consarns. She'll be a pew above me, an' hed a lot o' start. An't ye going to do owt for 'em, Cowlamb; she's your awn baen?'

'What will you do?'

'Me?—pooh. She's yar dowter—nay, he's not *my* lad. Pretty well I leave him summuts when I'm happed up.'

'She'd no business to go off as she did.'

'She was a good-woolled un, Cowlamb.'

There was such a roguish 'come now, bear no malice' look in the old fellow's eyes as he brought his hand down upon Cowlamb's thigh, that Cowlamb so far forgot himself as to smile.

'Well, what will *you* do?' asked Cowlamb again.

'Give 'em all the money I got in my pocket now, if you give 'em a start.'

Cowlamb suffered some sound to escape him, and with it a shake of the head implying dissatisfaction.

'Why, ya can afford it. Ya've a son I knaw, bud he wants no crutch.'

Cowlamb shook his head in silence.

'How much dost ee think I've got in my pocket—coom now, I've paid a lot to-day, an' still I'll up'owd it I hug more about wi' me than thou does.'

'Oh——,' muttered Cowlamb, hating purse-proud folks—fellows who showed their money.

'Look thee here, Cowlamb,' said the

jobber, sternly; 'don't let me ha' to go to 'em. Thou wodn't like thy awn baen to set her face agean thee.'

'Why, what would ye do?'

'I am not going to oppen my mouth to fill other folkses. Thou's a nice little place thou bowt, put 'em in it. She's been used to a farm, an' he's been used to work. She'll pine yonder at Haveluck, maybe dee; it's not a healthy place; a lot dees in a year. If that lass o' thine deed, Cowlamb, thou'd niver forgi' thysen; now, would tha?'

Cowlamb did feel a twinge of concern. Sam had been a 'mort o' trouble;' he had died. His life and ways of late years had been unlovely; Cowlamb's heart had been half broken long before Sam died; the father had suffered—no one could guess his misery. For all that he never said to himself he was thankful that Sam was gone, and Iphis—she had for a long time been a comfort to his eyes and heart. Her flight had not touched his heart so much as his temper. He could

not reproach her other than that she had shown a woman's constant heart and opposite will. He began to think that he might as well put a good face on it and have her back. What was done could not be undone. He had some vague fear of his right-hand neighbour's threat. Still, what could this old man do? He surely could not alienate a daughter's natural affection?—and Cowlamb had faith in Iphis's likes and dislikes. How could he have other with her last escapade before him?

He journeyed home from the 'pig-market house' brooding. He stumbled in his walking, his eyes bent down upon the road. He met people whom he knew; he was aware of their nods and salutations, but he forgot to return their greetings, he was so pre-occupied. He knew that his manner excited some curiosity, conjecture. They were deciding that this last trouble was telling upon him, aging him. Some would have harsh criticism on his character. What a thing it was

a man should set his heart so upon money, that he would go so far as to sacrifice his own daughter to his avarice! Conjecture can never be wholly truth. Perhaps he divined truly, it was just possible other causes were assigned for his absent gait.

'I shall want my breakfast in good time,' said he, his first greeting to his wife. 'I want to go to Haveluck i' the morning.'

'Shall ye see owt o' Iphis,' inquired Mrs. Cowlamb, half closing her eyes as if to meet a storm of words. Her voice evinced no eagerness—simply curiosity. Cowlamb looked round sharply.

'I'm going o' purpose,' said he, with biting emphasis.

Mrs. Cowlamb was a mother, if hard-souled. During the day she had been thinking of Iphis, conflicting sentiments ruling her. Iphis's treachery was not to be looked lightly over. She had been thinking, though, that her husband might make his will disinheriting her, leaving everything

to the half-brother. Cowlamb might go off suddenly. Her eyes glistened a little, but she did not speak again. Cowlamb resented this, regarding her with a curious, repelling look, compounded of pride, crossness, and offence that she was not more eager. If she had asked questions, she knew that in his present mood he would not ten to one have troubled himself to answer them. Not feeling himself wholly victor, he would not communicate to her his plans and his thoughts. After a time she could not help asking the question, 'Shall ye hev 'em back?'

If she had said, 'Shall you have her back?' her husband perhaps would have been less tart. As it was he echoed her mockingly—'Hev 'em back? I don't know what I shall do till I get there. I shan't hev 'em here.' Mrs. Cowlamb surmised by this what his intentions were, the small house on the little farm he had bought. 'Where's that letter fra?' His eyes detected an unbroken

envelope resting on its edge on the window shelf.

'I don't know. You'd nobbut just gone when it come.'

'Just hand it here,' commanded he, drying his hands on the towel his obsequious wife had brought him. He broke the seal and read on.

'Why,' exclaimed he, greatly perturbed, 'owd Long's deead!'

'Deead? Mr. Long?' repeated she, equally surprised.

'Heigh—what a humbug it is, nobbut three quarters of mile from Moortown, and one's letters having to come fra Willowby, unless somebody meets th' postman at th' lane-end. I'll hev a box there, that I will.'

'Who's writ th' letter?' inquired Mrs. Cowlamb.

'Miss Grinstead to be suer. That parson fellow's been, th' owd man used to ramp about. I am to go ower. Owd Long gave 'em to understand afore he died I was a trustee.

Well, I s'll ha' to go there i' th' morning. I s'll want my break'ast i' good time all th' same. I s'll drive Tet.'

Cowlamb was not surprised at being named in the will. He wondered if it was a late instrument, or one made some years back. However, he felt some bitterness, and he would not talk any more. If that stupid lass had not been so obstinate she would now have dropped in for a good thing, and after a decent season she might have married a chimney-sweep, if her fancy had gone for a soot bag.

CHAPTER 36.

YET TO SPEAK.

Miss Grinstead was decorously sad, though not overpowered with grief. The poor old lady's life had not been one of roses. She had lived many years with a most captious tyrant, inconsiderate with his tongue and dreadfully short in his temper. Her voice now carried that hush we always note in the house where some one lies dead. Almost the first question that Cowlamb asked bore upon the old man's last hours—whether he died 'seeking for full redemption.' She was intensely communicative.

'He didn't alter a bit,' she said, mournfully. 'His language was just as bad as ever—it was such a habit with him. Mr. Tenny

came, and Mr. Long stared at him so queerly, we had to tell Mr. Tenny he had better go out of Mr. Long's room. Mr. Long could speak, but he wouldn't speak to him. And after Mr. Tenny had gone out, Mr. Long was in such a passion he frothed at the mouth, and when we got him pacified a little, he wanted to know who had sent for that "narrow-backed divil;" them were his very words, and then he said, "the hungeing[1] beggar would get nowt." Oh, it was dreadful at times the way he went on; he said "he wasn't going to die yet, and he wouldn't die."'

'Was he off his heead?' asked Cowlamb.

'No—' returned she, hesitatingly. Miss Grinstead gave a moment's thought to consider whether Mr. Long had shown any sign of mental aberration. 'No; he was sharp in asking after the lad, what he was doing, and everything about the place. He was once talking about something I didn't understand, not that I wanted; and his eyes were closed. Then he

[1] Hungering.

opened 'em suddenly, and I asked him if he had been dreaming, and he said "Yes," sharp like, and asked me if he had said anything. It was always best to speak the truth to him, so I said "Yes, but I couldn't tell what he said," and he turned on me and said, "It's lies; you did, you owd witch, but it was all blash." Them were his very words. He wouldn't see Mr. Gerlimore. He seemed to have something against *him*. He said he wanted no canting parsons about him, full o' their tricks. I never heard anybody speak of Mr. Gerlimore like that.'

Cowlamb secretly thought that Mr. Long had a good case against parsons. He was sore against them himself.

'You know who's his lawyer,' said Cowlamb. 'When's th' buryin'?'

'To-day is Wednesday—Saturday. We've got a room ready for you. We have had the man sleeping in the house, and then, the boy and girl were afraid. Mr. Long's lawyer will be here on Saturday.'

'Did Mr. Long say owt about me?'

'He said "Cowlamb's a trustee—it's all right!" Them were his very words. He never spoke no more, and then when his hands began to work about, I knew it wasn't much longer he'd be alive. As soon as ever he died I wrote, the postman waited on me, and he was in a fine taking to be away.'

'Was he in bed long then?'

'Well, he went to see you,' said Miss Grinstead, with a side look; 'when he came back he seemed to get all wittery and was always fidgeting about and nervous, swearing if a door was opened or closed; and then he didn't eat well, and what he did eat did him no good, and then he got fast in the bed bottom. We kept him alive with sups of brandy; the doctor said there was nothing else. He would have gone long since but for it.'

'I was at market when your letter came. We get letters late in the day at our house.'

'And how's Iphis getting on?' asked Miss Grinstead.

'That I can't tell you,' said Cowlamb, turning his back upon her. 'That's a flam,' muttered Cowlamb, fancying he could detect the insincerity of her tongue.

'Shall you stay, Mr. Cowlamb?'

'No—I can't. I want to be at Haveluck, and I'm wanted at home.'

'Oh, here's the carpenter,' said Miss Grinstead. 'We sent for him night before last, but he was away from home. We got Mr. Long laid out that night.—Wipe your feet,' said Miss Grinstead, sharply, to the carpenter and his apprentice.

'Heigh, wipe thy feet, Enoch,' sternly echoed the carpenter, who had forgotten to wipe his own.

'You come to measure him, then,' said Cowlamb, business-like, 'he's Long, but he'll be no length, poor owd chap.' Cowlamb's humour was sombre as befitting the occasion.

Cowlamb re-entered the little room and sat down to a glass of gin, and Miss Grinstead resumed her conversation after she had piloted

the carpenter upstairs and down. But there was no man more restless than Cowlamb. Now nothing else was on his mind, he was in a feverish anxiety to be away again. He would have gone on, but Miss Grinstead insisted upon his staying dinner. When he came to think of it he comforted himself that his horse would be all the better for an hour or two's bait. If he went on he would be nowhere at dinner-time. He might have to pay for his dinner at Haveluck. Miss Grinstead talked on and on to him, often repeating herself. Much of it went in at one ear and out of the other. Cowlamb was beginning to wonder how Iphis would receive him. He was in a despondent mood. He had her to find, and that troubled him. Haveluck was a straggling place—streets and streets of houses, and every one a 'matler' [1] to the other, the point of distinction only in the number.

Miss Grinstead could see that her old neighbour was chafing, by his pre-occupation that

[1] Match.

he was unsettled in his mind or anxious. She had already discovered that Iphis was in some disgrace. There had been a great mystery, and she had not been able to fathom it. Mr. Long had let slip ugly words and imprecations—had glowered at her when she looked at him. She could not help her curiosity. Mr. Long had returned from Willowby overset. There had been some secret business between the two men that had not come to a head. Mr. Long had given her notice to leave the day he went to Willowby, but that she did not regard seriously. He had often given her notice, to apologise afterwards, and excuse himself on the score of hot temper.

Miss Grinstead wondered if Iphis was the mischief between the two men—if Cowlamb had induced her to listen to Mr. Long to throw him over finally. She watched Cowlamb's face; she was very shrewd in some things, although some people fancied that she was a little cracked. Cowlamb became aware that he was an object of interest, and the close scrutiny did

not tend to his ease. He was very thankful when the girl brought in the cloth and Miss Grinstead went out to take up the dinner.

'You'll excuse me, Mr. Cowlamb, but I dare not trust that girl with any cooking or dishing up.'

CHAPTER 37.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

'I've had father!' cried Iphis, impulsively, as Ephraim opened the door. She barely allowed him to get into the house. He was black and grimy, and his face until she spoke was full of content, then it clouded a little. The tenor of their life had been so even, he wished for no unsettling element—no change. They had got into a house to themselves, and although only the kitchen and the bed-room were sparsely furnished, Ephraim began to feel himself a man and a citizen. Ephraim worked at a coachbuilder's as second hand, and was discovered to be deft and intelligent. He was earning 'good money,' and working overtime, the money for which came to him

like a gift, remembering the long hours at the village smithy. Her words took much of his self-satisfaction out of him; he felt gloomy, and wondered what she would say next.

'Father wants us to go back.' She could not withhold the rush of exultant feeling. 'We can go and live at the house on the little farm.'

'Where is he now?' asked Ephraim, a little timidly, perhaps, or it might be constraint.

'Oh, he's gone home; he hasn't been gone long though. Ephraim, owd Mr. Long's dead, an's to be buried o' Saturday. Father's gone home by train and left "Tet" at the "Bull." We used to put up there when we lived at Snailhorn. Father asked me if you'd mind going down o' nights to see if the owd mare was going on all right.'

'I'll go when I done work,' said Ephraim, with little show of interest and not much grace.

'Fancy, Ephraim, Mr. Long dead so soon.

If I'd had him, why it would ha' been no time, then I should ha' had all his money, then I could have had you after.'

'D'ye rue, Iphis ?' asked he, quietly.

'No—o,' stammered she; 'why, Ephraim, you don't look ower well pleased.'

'I'm tired,' said he.

'Come an' have your tea, then. It's ready and waiting. What's the good o' standing there. What a chap you are, Eph, one would think you was waiting for me to put it into your mouth! Law, father sometimes used to be that nasty when he was hungry. Mother used to say, "Let him fill hissen out, then he'll be all reight, he's contrary as Dick's hat-band now."'

'Am I bad tempered, Iphis ?' asked Ephraim, without a smile. Somehow she did not like this questioning mood. She faced him with a world of tender solicitude in her eyes; still she was startled and alarmed.

'No,' she answered after a pause; 'but you seem queer.'

'Do you a'most rue, Iphis, you didn't marry owd Long—ee ?'

'No—o, why ?' asked she, perplexed.

'Why ?—why, I think if you had married owd Long he'd ha' been livin' yit. Th' owd fellow's gone mad wi' worry, an's niver sattled efter. He's died o' love,' said Ephraim, his sarcasm clinched with a hard, bitter laugh.

'Well—father says we may go back now,' said Iphis, propitiatingly.

'Now old Long's deead ?' said Ephraim, still captious.

'Father was suer to be put out, Ephraim ——Don't you want to go back, Ephraim ?' her mind considerably exercised. 'You needn't be frightened, Ephraim, of the owd blacksmith —if father said a word he dursn't——'

'Frightened of him,' laughed Ephraim, derisively, 'if he said a wrong word to me I'd smash him. I've nobbut got to know since I been here that he got a dele ower much out o' me. He fed me badly an' worked me hard, an' made me keep his books o' Sundays

because I could write better than he could. He'll have to mind what he says to me when we meet.'

Iphis was astounded, a little afraid. There was evidently a tempest rising in the equable Ephraim's breast. She endeavoured to coax him, to deprecate such anger.

'Come an' get your tea, Ephraim; it is poured out, an' I've got a half-cured haddock.' She could not help adding, with a little sorrowfulness, 'I thought you'd jump at going back.'

Ephraim's temper abated. The tone of sadness in her voice moved him. He sat down with some compunction visible in his face.

'I was soft, Iphis. No; somehow I don't seem to think much o' this going back to Willowby. We been so comfortable here; I have, awiver, an' I thowt you had.'

'I have been happy enough,' said Iphis, portioning the smoking appetising haddock, 'I niver rued, Ephraim, I'm sure I niver rued.'

'I've got so suer o' addlin' a good living here. I can do my work. When I see a thing done once, I can do it, an' I can do as much as onybody an' a bit more than a good many. T'other chap says I've a good notion for being browt up in a country shop, an' he's niver been onywhere but in a coach shop.'

Ephraim was still depressed. He could not forget his happy nights in his home, and he had made the home. Saturday nights when he and Iphis went out shopping together, the night she suffered him to take his jug and sit for an hour in an inn where he met fellow-workmen. They were in bed by eleven o'clock, an awful dissipated hour remembering country hours, but they sat up, Iphis's eyes heavy with sleep, so as to be like the rest of town folks. There was another dissipation too, the theatre. It was a terrible place. Three dramas a night, gloomy and horrible tragedies, fearful in incident, and the actors making the most of their parts. But

dramatic representation was such a new thing to Iphis. She wept, she was thrilled, she was full of a glorious joy, and her laughter came free and fearless. The honest sailor, the humble fisherman, the ingenuous gutter maiden outwitted the rich villain, the smug gentleman, the soulless lady of high degree, they sank into insignificance, their discomfiture was complete, before the virtues and noble qualities of the types of life indigenous to Haveluck.

And were not Sundays happy days? They did not always go to chapel in the morning, but cooked a dinner, and in the proceeding tore about like boy and girl, for Ephraim would help. After the dinner it was considered by them the correct thing to walk soberly down the sands as far as the village, which had outgrown itself, so highly favoured had it been with the patronage of inland folks who go down to the sea—in excursion trains. During the season Thorpesclee was exceedingly thick with the wives

and children of well-to-do tradesmen. The paterfamilias at home swelling with the idea of his household so disporting themselves, and not slow in acquainting his friends that on Saturday nights he joined his family at the seaside.

Sometimes Iphis met some one known to her. This was not always pleasurable; as a rule the young couple avoided old acquaintance. They did not care to be mentally canvassed, or hypocritically sympathised with, or patted on the back. It was pleasanter sitting on the sands watching the children, and the vagaries of the grown-up children, or looking seawards speculating on the far-away steamers passing. When the tide was low they could walk nearly a mile straight before them. Ephraim was fond of lying full length on a seat and gazing up skyward. He called it resting, what Sunday was made for. He could smoke, and the swell of the sea in his ears had a lulling effect. Iphis would hear something roll to the

ground ; it was his pipe ; then she discovered that her bread-winner had fallen asleep. Then she would think, and be herself entirely. The swell of the sea recalled an episode in her life. Could she forget it? One evening she related it to Ephraim. Until that evening he had never really known the cause of her long illness. Her unassuming narration almost froze the blood in Ephraim's veins.

'I say, lass,' he had said, uncomfortably impressed, 'don't tell me that tale again. It makes me feel badly.'

But as Iphis thought about it, although it was all still fresh and vivid in her mind, the purling, rippling wavelets before her, she could scarcely realise that they could ever have had so cruel a purpose. Once she witnessed some harebrained visitors having to race to escape isolation. There were shouts of laughter on the shore, or the pier. She could not laugh. And although the danger was not great, and boats were at hand, when she

found escape had been effected, it was a great relief to her overstrained mind.

Then she would wake Ephraim.

'I say, we s'll be late for chapel; let's go.'

Ephraim thought about his Saturday nights, his Sundays, his fellow-workmen, but more about his home and his independence.

'You'll be late,' said Iphis, glancing at her watch.

'I shan't go back to-night now,' said Ephraim. 'Are you going to write home?'

'No; father will be here on Saturday again. Mr. Long 'll be buried on Saturday, and father's a trustee. He left the mare here; he thought he'd overdo her. She'd been neither sick nor sorry once in her day,' said Iphis, proudly, 'but she's getting tender on her feet.'

'Didn't your father think it was a pity you didn't hev owd Long as things hes turned out?'

'Don't, Ephraim—— I'm tired o' hearing the owd man's name. He did say as much.'

'I don't half like this going back,' reiterated Ephraim. 'We have nobody here to interfere with us, and there'll be no more going on the sands——'

'Why, Ephraim,' laughed Iphis, 'we shall be a dele better off. We can have a fortnight here like the rest of fine folks, and have nothing to do all day but bathe and walk about, an' pick up shells an' make game o' folks that come in by trips. I've seen 'em, Ephraim, wi' their boots unlaced and their waistcoats unbuttoned here in Haveluck as if they meant to be in head over heels as soon as ever they got to the water—them Sheffielders, you know; you've seen 'em now, ain't you, Ephraim?'

And Ephraim, so easily moved to mirth, laughed uproariously with her. But he could see that Iphis was full of the idea of going back.

'D'ye think we s'll go back?' ventured she, with slow, low utterance. Eagerly her heart sought welcome reply.

'If thou's bent on it, we're bound to go.'

'Father said nowt agean you at all, Ephraim. He said we should live to oursens at the little house. And if we get on well with father, we should farm the land oursens. I can rear no end o' poultry there, and I'll have cows. If I can't make five pounds a week when things are in full profit out o' one thing and another, I know nowt about such things.'

Here Iphis drew up such a convincing calculation that Ephraim was easily gained over by her logic. He began to think that he might do worse than consent to learn farming under his wife's wing.

It had such an effect upon him that the next morning he debated whether it was worth while resuming work. Good sense prevailed. Iphis's father and he might not come to terms; if he threw up his shop he might not be taken on again. Moreover, he

had a desire to impress the other fellows with his connexions, and what was likely to be done for him, quailing sometimes, disturbed with thought as to how he would get on with his straight-backed father-in-law. But was not Ephraim a happy impulsed fellow, not likely to be troubled long with lugubrious thoughts? He soon began to be so confident as to be assured that his father-in-law and he could not possibly differ.

Iphis had met her father's proposal so readily Cowlamb had gone away home with his mind set at rest. It never once occurred to him that his new son-in-law would raise an objection. Iphis had opened the door to him, giving a little cry of surprise. He had had some difficulty in tracing her, and his heart was nearly in his mouth, when he saw how he was welcomed. She was distrait for a moment or two, afterwards a little self-conscious. Then he could not answer half the questions she had to ask him in a breath. She seemed to try to ignore the fact that she had done wrong,

that she should be in disgrace ; he likewise that he was to soften gradually, the programme he had decided upon. She sat him down in an arm-chair. He could not help but take in her surroundings—the few sticks of furniture she had got together. But he laughed, attempting to be good-humoured.

'Now, father, you musn't laugh ; it's all paid for. We're getting things by degrees.'

'I hadn't laughing at your furnitur,' said he good temperedly ; 'I didn't start hafe as well.'

'We're getting 'em by degrees.'

'An' paying for 'em as you go on ; that's right. Is it his megrim or yours?'

This was the first reference to Ephraim.

'Ephraim likes paying as we go on,' said she, anxious to put forward her husband in the best light.

'That'll do,' said her father with the approval of a Spartan.

Iphis scarcely knew yet how her father's pulse beat towards Ephraim. She supposed

he could not be over-cordially disposed. Perhaps it was as well that Ephraim was away the first time her father came.

'When will he be at home?' asked her father.

'He'll not leave before five; it will be after when he gets here. That's the worst of these towns; he's such a long way from his work. He gets so tired; they're working overtime, they're so busy. He goes after tea, and they don't leave 'till eight. But o' Saturday, they're like we used to be at school, half a day's holiday. We get cleaned, and go off to Thorpesclee sometimes. There's a band and dancing, and sometimes I see folks I know.'

'Humph,' responded the farmer, 'an' dost 'ee like it?'

'We're comfortable,' said Iphis, a little at sea.

'That's a good thing. But wouldn't ye like being on a farm better, where you ain't to run out for ivery ha'porth.'

'Well,' agreed Iphis, 'the milk niver has any cream on it if ye let it stand a week, it's that blue; and that's not all. You nobbut get a teacupful for a penny; and eggs!—I hardlins dare think about eggs—if you want English, they seem so dear; and I can't fancy them foreign eggs.'

'Humph!' grunted Farmer Cowlamb, glad to find that all was not smooth sailing. He sat silent for a few minutes. Iphis ran out to fill her kettle.

'Thou needn't bother; I shan't stop long—I want to be off home.'

'You weant go without a cup o' tea, I know, an' I've got what you like in the house. You used to bring haddocks home to Snailhorn. We can get 'em nicer; they're half cured and and not so dry. We offens have 'em—— an' you'll not see Ephraim?'

'No; I shall have to be going afore that time o' day,' and Farmer Cowlamb veered round for a clock, but could not find one. He then saw that Iphis's watch was hung over the

chimney-piece, but he could not see the time by it.

'It's only half-past three,' said she.

She was almost as well pleased her father did not intend stopping. They had only one bed. A neighbour might take her in; but then if Ephraim and her father slept together they would be uncongenial bed-mates; they might quarrel—'fall out,' as she put it. She scarcely knew whether the two were to be trusted together. She was determined, somewhat illogically, that the next purchase should be a spare bed. She wondered if her father would dip into his pockets. She should not ask him. She should take money if it was offered. He could give it if he liked and not feel it.

Her father felt his appetite come with the broiling haddock and the cheerful sound of the singing kettle; and, as Mrs. Cowlamb said, food went far to remove his acerbity or ill-humour.

But for a little soreness at Cowlamb's heart

Iphis might have been the one who had never yet lost his favour. He left her with a kiss, and promised to call again on the Saturday and hear what decision they had come to. If Ephraim fell in with his proposal, she might return with him, Ephraim to follow as soon as he had got the furniture packed.

After her father had gone, Iphis felt that she had Ephraim to persuade. He had said over and over again that he would not care to change places with any man.

CHAPTER 38.

THE DEAD MAN'S VOICE.

Ephraim would have made a sad hole in his manners had he listened to the voice of the tempter, staying away from work to pass his time idly, thinking that now the farmer was disposed to take them under hand, it was useless griming his fingers any longer at the anvil. Cowlamb on the Saturday morning heard of Ephraim's devotion with some complacency. He thought more of that than of Ephraim's compliance. The farmer was in a very good mood; but at night when he returned his mood had changed. At Snailhorn he had appeared in a most unpleasant light. The unsigned will was produced and commented upon. Everything real and per-

sonal was bequeathed to Iphis Long, excepting some trifling bequests—a legacy of one hundred pounds among the rest to Miss Grinstead. Every eye rested critically on Farmer Cowlamb, who was sole executor, notably the 'parson,' the inference drawn that his daughter was the legatee intentioned. The solicitor stated that Mr. Long had given him instructions to draw up this will, and he was to have met Mr. Long, but a telegram reached him stating that he was to wait until he heard from Mr. Long again. The properly attested will Mr. Long had taken away with him, expressing an intention of destroying it himself. Even if he had destroyed it, and this instrument had been properly attested, where was Iphis Long? The solicitor thought that in the absence of any will the heir-at-law must inherit. Had Mr. Long confided anything to Miss Grinstead. She could only repeat what Mr. Long had said disconnectedly of Mr. Cowlamb. She had written to Mr.

Cowlamb to that effect as soon as Mr. Long was dead.

'There is nothing for it but a search,' said the Haveluck lawyer; 'he may not have destroyed that will after all.'

Mr. Long's desk, Mr. Long's corner closet were examined, drawers tapped, all Miss Grinstead's keys requisitioned. The dining-room table was strewed with papers and documents, some of value. Every hole and corner was ransacked, but no will was forthcoming. The lawyer sat down profoundly cogitating. At last he turned to Miss Grinstead.

'Did Mr. Long burn any papers?'

Miss Grinstead shook her head.

'I must have seen him, or heard him, if he did. Although,' added she, 'he was curious since he returned home.'

She looked across at Cowlamb, who sat fidgeting, inwardly apostrophising the great misfortune it was to him, this incomplete testament and condition.

'He had been out,' interposed the lawyer, 'where?'

'He went home with Mr. Cowlamb from Haveluck, eight weeks ago.'

'Eight weeks? Why that would be the day he came to my office, and gave me the draft. I recollect he said I should be met at Moortown in the morning. A telegram was put into my hand as I was going down to the railway station. Of course Mr. Long explained to me——" The lawyer caught sight of Cowlamb and refrained; 'he certainly took the old will away with him; very odd, very odd man. Mr. Cowlamb, you do not know whether he destroyed any papers at your house?'

'No,' said Cowlamb, curtly. 'He kept it close if he did. He was nobbut a night at my house.'

'The will he took away was executed seven years ago. I thought it a very just and equitable will.'

Every one was silent. At last, with the

abruptness of a happy thought, the lawyer exclaimed—'What clothes had he on that day? Now I come to think of it, I remember him placing it in his breast pocket, declaring he would burn *that* himself, then he would know that it was done.'

'It was a black overcoat,' said Miss Grinstead, in some excitement; 'yes, there were some papers in the breast pocket when I brushed it. I took them out and put them back again—he was in such a temper if he did not find things where he left them. If you will hand me the keys, sir, I will fetch all his coats.'

While Miss Grinstead was away every one sat in some perturbation, each one nevertheless striving to appear staid and composed. The lawyer was more excited than they all, and showed it more, walking backwards and forwards on the hearthrug, biting his iron-grey moustache and pushing his fingers through his hair.

After a time Miss Grinstead returned, her

arms burthened with coats. She was quite out of breath. 'There are some more,' panted she, 'but he has not worn them these twenty years.'

'You are quite out of breath.' The lawyer could not forbear smiling. 'If in any coat, I should say it will be in the one he wore the day he was at Haveluck.'

Miss Grinstead placed her hand in the breast pocket and drew out an old pocket-book, some loose papers, and letters in envelopes.

'There it is!' cried the lawyer, excitedly; 'I could swear to it anywhere.'

Every one now craned forward anxiously —every one except Cowlamb, who felt as if he was out of place. Some rose, and the lawyer commenced reading in the hurried way peculiar to the profession.

'A fortunate thing for you, Miss Grinstead; you have an annuity of one hundred pounds instead of the legacy for that sum. I must say it was due to you. And you, sir,'

said the lawyer, turning and bowing to the clergyman, 'have no reason to complain.' One thousand pounds each was bequeathed to three individuals not represented.

'One of the men was over here last summer,' said Miss Grinstead. 'I thought he had come to borrow money, by what Mr. Long said after he had gone. I know Mr. Long gave him some. While he was here Mr. Long would scarcely speak to him. I thought Mr. Long was frightened of him. He wouldn't have him stay in the house; late as it was he sent David off with him in the gig to Haveluck.'

'The owd man's bastards!' muttered Cowlamb with quick intelligence; no one heard what Cowlamb did say, but every one followed his facial gesture, and comprehended.

Cowlamb felt more and more uncomfortable. His name was not even recorded. Every one seemed to him to be looking at him as if he was a defeated swindler. Cow-

lamb felt as if he was the victim of a heartless hoax.

He carried his misery with him to Haveluck. He felt completely out of joint. No wonder that Ephraim was not impressed or hopeful with his father-in-law's manner towards him. The farmer was sour and would not look at him—a sardonic, hard smile about his mouth. He had some disparaging allusion to Iphis's baggage. Ephraim had intended to journey with them, but he was overruled by Iphis. The furniture was not out of the house.

'If the railway-man does come for it, you can come by the last train, Ephraim, or else in the morning.'

Cowlamb never so much as uttered a word in acquiescence. Iphis, with her shawls and sundry parcels in her arms, was standing at her father's side. Ephraim felt it almost like a separation. At last they were gone, and he felt very miserable. The house, in the throes of dismemberment, seemed to impress

him with the bitterness of desolation. Everything was in the front room, the bed tied up, all in waiting for the lax railway lorryman. He wished he had got some one to help him down with them to the railway station. He counted his money, he wished he had a glass of ale. At last he rushed out of the door.

Iphis was just climbing into the trap when Ephraim came up almost breathless. He had a limp parcel in his hand, and went round to the back of the trap; Farmer Cowlamb observing him, produced his key.

'What have you got there?' asked Iphis, and her father looked inquiringly.

'Haddocks!' replied Ephraim, 'I thought you'd like to take some home with you.'

Farmer Cowlamb's face relaxed a little. He took the key, but without looking at Ephraim, and got up by the side of Iphis.

'Clk!' to the horse; a shrewd puckering of his lip, and a gleam in his eyes, showed that Cowlamb was amused with the turn

his son-in-law's thoughtfulness took. Iphis watched her father a little shamefacedly. Did Ephraim bring this present as a sop to ingratiate himself? Ephraim was an odd fellow; she was willing to admit that there was something about him very boyish. Scarcely a word passed between father and daughter. Iphis knew her father; it was no light thing that had changed him; in the morning he had been equable and smooth. Would he tell her? She did not dare to ask him any questions. It was something connected with Mr. Long's affairs. He had had to endure a greater mortification than the loss even of Mr. Long's money. She was almost afraid he would tell her. Something of it did come before they reached home; what he did tell her was given with stoical bitterness. His voice was hard and clear, but his pride had suffered—he had felt himself humiliated. He did not say so to her, but he felt that the finger of every one there pointed to him with scorn as a base and greedy schemer. Iphis

almost trembled for Ephraim, and began to think with Ephraim that it was a risk giving up their independence, that there might be war, and happiness between man and wife destroyed. Ephraim had spirit when driven into a corner, and Iphis knew how exasperating and persistent her father could be, how sternly he would strive to bend every one to his will, and if he set himself against any one how difficult a matter reinstation in his goodwill became.

Cowlamb did not touch upon the episode of the will, of the persons who inherited, of Mr. Long's blood but not of his name. He mentioned Miss Grinstead's good fortune sulkily. He had set her down as the fugler, who by her looks towards him gave the rest of the company the cue. No doubt Miss Grinstead and the lawyer had had it all over before he arrived at the old house.

Iphis did not reach home with an assured heart. Her mother was standing at the door, her lips in utter subjection. Before she

spoke she must be sure of her lord; her husband looked more miserable than herself, so she contented herself with a calm greeting.

'Where,' stammered she, 'where's—thy husband?'

'Oh, Ephraim, he'll be here to-morrow morning,' replied Iphis, brightening.

'I got the house aired yonder,' volunteered Mrs. Cowlamb for the imformation of Iphis, and to obtain approval from her husband. 'There's some good fires yonder——'

The farmer silenced his wife with a look.

'Hadn't thou in for taking her in?' he inquired, contemptuously. 'Iphis weant go yonder by hersen. She'll stop here. Let's ha' some tea, missis, quick! I solidly want my tea. The lass'll be faint, I knaw.'

'There's some haddocks in the trap, I'd forgotten. I'll go fetch 'em—we'll have some cooked. No, mother, they weant sprink your bars, they can be done in the oven.

CHAPTER 39.

CLOUDS.

And so, according to all precedent, the story should end here. Love's course, hitherto not smooth, has consummated in wedlock, the rebellious daughter pardoned, the audacious lover receiving some toleration because it is always wise as necessary to make the best of things when they come to the worst. The cruel father having relented, becomes the good parent, and every one lives happily ever after. Alas! it is not always so; it is not so here. Life has in it many of the elements of the fairy tale, if we could see it so. In fairy lore we come across the disturbers of the balance of peace, and some of us are rather sceptical of these personages remaining quiescent for

ever and a day. In real life peace is often armed, and an armed peace, we are given to understand, is dangerous to the commonweal. If we ourselves accept circumstances under protest, do we not feel at perfect liberty to rise in revolt when we feel ourselves strong enough? Our words are smooth and the wind of our temper is becalmed, but a becalmed sea is only too often a sure indication of a storm held in reserve.

Seed-time and harvest came and passed. Ephraim and Iphis, ensconced in their trim little house, seemed to have settled down into staid, married folk. The harmony seemed complete. Ephraim carried her weekly baskets of butter and eggs down to Farmer Cowlamb's house, and then Iphis followed after to ride down to market in her father's trap. The market day is the farmer's *jour de la semaine*. Only Ephraim had a tendency to be too fond of company, the market-merry farmers, and occasionally he received a lecture from Iphis for such delinquencies, and sometimes a severe

glance from Farmer Cowlamb. But the summer was tided over without any rupture.

It was true that Ephraim was not regarded by the labourers with any degree of caution or respectful deference. He made himself too much one with them. His father-in-law was somewhat disgusted that it did not come naturally to Ephraim to hold his own. But the farmer was more exasperated with Ephraim than he had ever been since the couple returned, when he caught the married man playing at pitch and toss with a young labourer and the waggoner in the middle of the day. The daily man was paid off, the waggoner had a short shrift, and Ephraim did not escape the gibes and jeers of his irate father-in-law. This was really the first tiff in the armed peace, the *casus belli*. Hostilities commenced in a desultory way, but all the raids and smothered abuse coming from Farmer Cowlamb. And how did Ephraim marshal his forces ? Foolishly. He dodged the farmer. He would go anywhere to get

out of the farmer's sight; was known even to sneak into the henhouse, until Iphis felt that she must soon despise her husband. Ephraim had long been gradually losing his spirit; moreover, he was too anxious to avoid a serious disturbance. Farmer Cowlamb did not round on Ephraim fiercely; he sneered at him, reproached him with curled lip and impatient eye, talked at him. If Ephraim strove to look after things zealously, Farmer Cowlamb showed an incredulous eye. The greatest grievance, though, with the farmer, was Ephraim's well-to-do uncle, who had not 'pottered out,' as Cowlamb remarked sourly to his wife.

Ephraim rose morning after morning in the cold spring to look after the sheep, and Iphis, hoping to mitigate her father's harshness, alluded to her husband's anxiety and attention. But the farmer retorted ungenerously.

'He'd better lig i' bed. What good ud he do? Shepherd knaws his work. Larn——?'

Cowlamb's lip curled with contempt.

Ephraim heard it, and afterwards termed his father-in-law in no graceful language, 'an owd fool,' which Iphis resented hotly.

'You've no reason to call him a fool after all he's done for you.' She was a spitfire against any one who maligned her father.

'I'll warrant it,' cried Ephraim with sulky hopelessness, 'I can't be reight between ye.'

Iphis half regretted her heat, for in common justice she must admit that Ephraim had to endure much unmerited obloquy and persecution. Still, she could not stand by and hear her father railed at so gracelessly.

'I wish we'd never left Haveluck,' sighed Ephraim. 'I guessed how it would all end. I'm a dummy, my hands and my feet are tied, an' my mouth shut. If I do do anything on my own hook, I'd no business to do it, an' if I don't do things I'm good for nothing. I've a good mind to bolt. What's the use o' me stopping here while I ain't got the sperrit

of a mouse. I s'll be flaring up some day an' making things worse. I've a good mind to be off back to Haveluck, an' if you can get on better wi'out me than wi' me, well an' good. It's like being buried alive, an' if I drop into a public-house when I go to Moortown, it's eyes and limbs from you, an' him, if *you* don't say much. I want a bit o' something else but work an' sleep. We was comfortable at Haveluck, lass ; I wish we never had left, Iphis—that I do.'

'I don't,' said Iphis, bluntly. 'We couldn't ha' lived there as we have done here. You don't go on reight somehow, Ephraim, with father, and I don't know how it is.'

'But I do,' proceeded Ephraim. 'He's niver fancied me, Iphis, and he niver will, that's just it. Look here, Iphis, if I was to go yonder to work agean, I could come back'ards and for'ards.'

Ephraim spoke plausibly, but Iphis scouted the idea. 'Such rubbish!' retorted she, scornfully.

Shortly afterwards Ephraim went upstairs and changed his clothes. Iphis followed him out.

'Where are you going, Ephraim?' asked she.

'To Moortown,' returned he, a little maliciously.

'Not to Haveluck?' inquired she, anxiously.

'No.' A smile transformed him into the old Ephraim, so that her mind was set at rest, and her heart warmed towards him.

'What are you goin' to Moortown for?'

'To see about some management.' (Management is a term for manure.)

Iphis, although no longer suspicious of him, could not forbear thinking the journey was unnecessary.

Farmer Cowlamb espied Ephraim coming down the lane.

'Now, what's yon creatur in his heead?' muttered Cowlamb to his wife. He waited.

'He's gone past the gate,' said Mrs. Cow-

lamb, with her facility of helping a lame dog over a stile.

'Heigh,' assented her husband, rushing bareheaded out of the house and through the gate, to shout after his *bête noire*, a hundred yards ahead, and only visible from the waist upwards owing to the descent of the road. 'Heigh!' shouted Cowlamb, with the fluttering newspaper in his hand. 'Where art ee goin'?'

'To Moortown,' shouted Ephraim.

'What for?'

'To tell 'em we'll fetch that muck i' the mornin'.'

'Humph,' muttered the half-appeased farmer. 'One o' the lads mud ha' gone down; leaving yon lass by hersen.'

Ephraim not hearing any more proceeded on his journey, and Farmer Cowlamb, his thin hair stirring in the breeze, went into the house again. But he could not settle himself down again to reading the newspaper. After fidgeting about he got up.

'Yon creatur's left yon lass by hersen, an' you know how she's fixed, one on us ought to go down. I'm suer I can't sit here wi' her yonder by hersen. She s'd have a little lass. There's Groundsel, he's a baen, they'd be glad to get her her vittles out. Now, see Groundsel's wife i th' morning, d' ye hear?'

'Im suer she owt to ha' somebody,' whined Mrs. Cowlamb.

'Then why didn't ye say so afore?' demanded Cowlamb, up in arms in a moment. 'You women ought to manage all such affairs among ye. Bless my soul, to think I ha' to think about such things. If you'd hed a houseful o' baens i'stead o' that one lass maybe you'd been different. Bud you'd everything ready to your hands months afore.'

Mrs. Cowlamb received her husband's contumelious snarl with great docility. Her rejoinder came from her point of vantage, the pantry.

'I don't see you've any call to go on like

that,' deprecated she, 'when th' nurse 'ill come at five minutes' notice.'

'Well, are you going down, or am I?'

'I can't,' answered Mrs. Cowlamb, despairingly. 'How can I? I've got the butter to make up, I dursn't let that gell do it wi'out me being there. She'd put ower much salting or not hafe mix it, or leave a lot of the buttermilk in. She'd niver hafe work it.'

'Bah!' said the farmer, contemptuously, 'then I mun go down.'

And it came to pass that Cowlamb, whenever Ephraim left the house, said nothing to him, never attempted to intercept him, or ask him the why and the wherefore. The simple fact that Ephraim was in the lane making his way down was the signal for Cowlamb to reach down his hat. He waited until he judged that Ephraim had passed the house end, then he would sally out in the direction Ephraim had traversed. It happened that Ephraim became alive to this; turning round he would catch a glimpse of

his father-in-law doggedly taking the way he had come. Iphis always told her husband when her father had been at the house, and at last Ephraim rejoined bitterly.

'He takes good care he doesn't come to the house when I *am* at home. He'll be round the closes i' th' day, but he'll hardlins hev a word wi' me.'

Ephraim felt his position acutely. Cowlamb could laugh at him. Ephraim, no matter how grave his quarrel, could not forbid his father-in-law the house when it and everything on the land belonged to him, and everything was in his name. Ephraim, as he felt hand and tongue tied, drifted more and more to Moortown, and some who loved dissensions in families as capital food for gossip retailed their opinion as to the precious son-in-law the astute Cowlamb had got. But is it not the nature of some people to regard the fortunate with malignancy, as if to gain their eminence, the well-placed had walked over the necks of the scoffers? No people

were fonder of discussing the matter than members of Cowlamb's own body, the brethren of his class less mealy-mouthed than any. Ephraim at length got to turn and sarcastically watch his father-in-law stumping away up the lane. Looking behind him was not a habit with Cowlamb. He had a sidelong twitch in his loins which became more characteristic of him year by year. This peculiarity was only made more manifest by the stiffening of his joints. Neither Ephraim nor Iphis seemed to observe that the farmer was aging, that his ill-temper was in a measure due to an unrecognised feeling of failing strength. Mrs. Cowlamb observed that her husband passed more time in the house, that he had longer rests after meals, although his vigour to her was apparently the same, his energy as pronounced. Cowlamb himself never gave it a thought that he had aged quicker the last two years than the ten before them. He knew well enough that he was not so nimble and good a man as he was

ten years ago ; he did not expect that he was going to live for ever, or even retain all his faculties and his strength to the last day of his life. Something must go. He felt himself a little stiffer, a little older, that was all, and he counted on some years yet. Perhaps he believed himself a better man than he really was. Had Ephraim comprehended that much of his father-in-law's crapulous humour was due to a breaking up, perhaps his conduct would have been different. For Ephraim was certainly in fault in many instances—careless, imprudent, and shallow. His visits to Moortown became more and more frequent, and his stay when he got there more and more prolonged.

CHAPTER 40.

GODFATHERS.

Matters seemed to have got to their worst when there occurred an interesting event. A birth. And twins, and both boys. The farmer was extravagantly exhilarated. It seemed to put new life in him. He even became jocular. He could regard Ephraim with a more lenient eye. He rallied Ephraim. To ears refined his figure of speech would have sounded somewhat coarse. But certain occurrences in farming life are freely discussed before the sex without exciting shame or repulsion. Ephraim carried himself a little self-consciously, too, it must be confessed. The poor lad really thought that there was now a truce to all his troubles. They were

a pair of 'wick' babes, with their black downy skulls and dark eyes, favouring Ephraim both of them. One's impression, beholding a head at either end of the cradle, was as if some more startling freak of nature had occurred. They might have reached the age of a month, when one morning Ephraim and Iphis beheld the grandfather making for the house with something under his arm. Their greatest expectations were raised. It was something worth having, they felt confident. Their expectations were scarcely realised when the farmer, unfolding the last week's 'Mercury,' produced two money boxes of substantial build and weight, made by the village carpenter out of elm, ends of coffin planking. They were varnished over, and it was still very sticky, and the initials of each babe were placed on the box designed for it, large enough to read without spectacles.

'There!' said Farmer Cowlamb, as he placed the boxes on the table, retreating a little distance away from them, his eye ranging

over them admiringly ; ' now that's not half a bad job. Carpenter's made 'em. I've put summuts in mysen,' taking up a box, and giving it a convincing shake ; ' bud I shan't tell what it is. An' them boxes isn't to be broken open a neither. Sithee, Iphis—the lasses used to stick a knife in the hole when thou wast a baen, and draw th' pennies out ; th' hussies. No lass 'll draw out o' this. Just try.'

A piece of elastic web nailed inside round the slit prevented abstraction. He took up a table knife, showing her the impracticability.

' Ephraim, hast thou heerd from that owd uncle o' thine ? He owt to come out now. One on 'em christened efter me, t'other efter him. He mud ha' hed his pick if he thowt good to come, bud I'll be dal'd if I can tell t'other from which. There's a little bit o' difference if you come to look close, bud they're like peys in a pod for sure. I say, Ephraim, Bean ought to come out.'

' He's ower close,' said Ephraim, hopelessly,

'though he has gen me a sovereign or two,' added he in extenuation.

'He's ower scar'd o' thou spending,' said Cowlamb, sarcastically. 'He holds hard. Well, maybe I oughtn't to blame him. You did write an' tell him you'd christened one on 'em efter him.'

'Yis,' said Ephraim, 'bud he niver writ back.' Ephraim would never have written had he not been urged to do so by Farmer Cowlamb.

'I mud as well write an' tell the Duke o' Wellington I've called a baen after him,' Ephraim had remarked grumblingly to his wife.

'I s'll be on to him,' said Cowlamb, determinedly. 'I know what he said to me.'

Ephraim's eyes opened. What had old Bean said? Ephraim never had learned that anything had passed between the two men. Ephraim looked inquiringly at Cowlamb.

The farmer noticed Ephraim's surprised face. He had a dry, chuckling, masterful

laugh. 'Oh, it's nowt that consarns you so much as it does me,' said Cowlamb, unencouragingly.

The highly gratified grandparent spent some half hour longer whistling to the infants, advising Iphis as to the rearing of them, and recounting peculiarities and traits of her infancy, and that of her brothers, when they were just such mites. It was very interesting, no doubt, to all concerned, less so to outsiders.

The fortnight market was held on the morrow. Every alternate market day there was a great influx of stock into Moortown, and much business was done. Towards the evening of that day an old man, stout and burly, was observed by Cowlamb, making his way towards Ephraim's.

'Where's the clean towel?' shouted Cowlamb, in the anger of hurry. His hands were wet, and he had a sudden desire to get down to Ephraim's. 'Yon's Bean, off down to Iphis's. I mun go an' all.' He looked in at

the kitchen. Mrs. Cowlamb was not there. He was in a fume. Then Sarah, the servant, appeared.

'Where's the towel? Where's your missis?' Cowlamb's tempest abating.

'She has just gone to fetch one, sir,' said Sarah.

The present maid-servant was one who stood upon her dignity, spoke much better language than either master or mistress, was keen and intelligent; moreover good-looking. And she had a temper; more than once she had startled her mistress, even to making Cowlamb's hair almost rise. It was astonishing the respect and forbearance she commanded. Mrs. Cowlamb sometimes wondered if she was herself, she had got into such a dainty way of requesting her girl to do anything.

Sarah had, however, obtained the good opinion of the master. She had assented so willingly to go down to Iphis's and make herself useful. Iphis indeed felt herself owing a great debt to the good-looking,

neat-handed Phillis, who did not weigh her services or give them grudgingly or with eye service.

'Yon's Bean,' said Cowlamb to his wife. 'I saw him at market, but he was throng,[1] so I didn't go bother him. I thowt he'd gone home by that two train. Fetch me my hankicher—that black silk 'un. I wonder if Iphis has any gin i' the house!'

Cowlamb nearly choked himself tying his neckerchief, he was in so violent a hurry. As he whisked off after jobber Bean, his wife muttered dismally, 'More hurry, less speed.'

Cowlamb found Mr. Bean ensconced in Iphis's kitchen, regarding Iphis's babies with some jovial amusement in his face. He was asking Iphis which was his and which was Cowlamb's, joking with her on their points of resemblance. A good understanding seemed to have become quickly established between the old man and the young wife and mother. Cowlamb came in boisterously. Iphis fancied

[1] Busy.

that a shade of annoyance swept over Mr. Bean's face.

'Now, Bean, pretty doings, eh? Twins first off. Them chaps run double.'

'Single, Cowlamb; one's thine, one's mine.'

'Art satisfied? Thou could ha' had thy pick, but we was bound to have 'em named.'

'Oh, it's all reight. They're brant[1] an' no mistake.'

Mr. Bean stayed tea, and so did Cowlamb, and any shadow there might be quickly passed. They had become so communicative over their past experiences, their uphill fight, they might have been brothers long separated rejoicing, now they had come together, on the success which had crowned their efforts. Ephraim was astonished at his father-in-law's condescension. Cowlamb apparently was warming to him, and Ephraim, easily stirred, talked like an oracle, and laughed and chattered now and

[1] Erect.

again, without feeling he was so much on sufferance or under criticism.

Cowlamb did not forget to call Bean's attention to the primitive money boxes. Bean responded, but Cowlamb was greatly disappointed to find that he only favoured one, but Cowlamb thought it prudent not to notice such invidiousness. He was mortified when, a week or two later, an engraved silver mug came for Mr. Bean's namesake. Farmer Cowlamb had to do the same for his *protégé*. He was not slow to disburse his money, but he could not help looking upon the purchase of a silver mug as a stupid way of benefiting a baby, when the baby would be just as well satisfied with one of sound block tin ; later on in life, with one of china, on which might be a picture of Haveluck Tower or Treminster Cathedral, with the inscription to certify that it was a present from a relative.

Mr. Bean and Mr. Cowlamb, after tea, walked round the house and then through the fields, their thumbs in the armholes of their

waistcoats. Their faces were grave as judges, and their conversation as profound. Ephraim followed in their wake, pensive and serious, Cowlamb inwardly anathematising him for hanging unto them. Cowlamb was waiting for Bean 'to put his foot into it'—namely, commit himself where he could not well withdraw; but Bean as cleverly evaded Cowlamb's feints. Cowlamb believed that Bean was chary of speaking, lest foolish Ephraim, sneaking behind, should have his hopes raised extravagantly high. Cowlamb at last succeded in detaching Ephraim, sending him off to his own house with some message. Ephraim, elate with the fancy that he had crept into his old uncle's favour, went off with alacrity.

Iphis inside the house was quite shrewd enough to determine her father's idea, getting Bean out of the house. She was exasperated at Ephraim rising and following them. He would spoil everything; she would have stopped him had she foreseen his intention.

She was not too proud to receive material assistance or advancement from a well-to-do relative. It is the custom. If a man is poor he soon succeeds in getting the wife if some one else has the promise of a farm in reserve for him. Both sides do all they can to start the beginners. Here, so far, Cowlamb had done everything, but for all that Ephraim did not hold the reins yet, and that comforted Cowlamb. Iphis knew that her father could do very well without the other side meeting him, but there was a sort of etiquette about it.

To have looked at the round-faced stumpy Bean, and to have heard him talk, any one would have imagined him a simple, guileless old fellow, so easily led that he would sow his money broadcast if so advised. Farmer Cowlamb would not have given him that character. Cowlamb knew him as straight and holding to his word, paying to the uttermost farthing, but still holding to his luck tenaciously as he now held to his bank-book.

Mr. Bean succeeded in getting away

without being compelled to touch definitely upon money matters ; succeeded in shelving Cowlamb's hints and innuendoes ; got away in fact without committing himself to promising anything, and Cowlamb was more vexed than he cared to say. He felt himself too proud to ask this old fellow, or remind him of his promise. Bean was not Ephraim's father ; he was but a distant relative. But if he meant to fall to, why did he not say something.

Iphis looked up with an inquiring movement of her eyebrows. Her father was amused to discover her supreme cleverness. But he turned his head away from her in the humour he was in, a tantalising humour. Then he relented ; the lass, deep as a well, knew what he had 'ticed' Bean out of the house for. He looked at her with a dolorous shake of the head.

'Bean's a close man!'

CHAPTER 41.

A CONTRETEMPS.

A NOD from some wiseacre may decide the destiny of a world. Mr. Bean seemed to have decided the destiny of the unfortunate Ephraim. Beyond the silver mug there came no other testimony of regard or proffer of support. Nor did Mr. Bean repeat his visit, although it was well known to every one interested that he showed his face periodically in Moortown.

It became a harder battle for Ephraim. His father-in-law's urbanity soon wore off; if anything, his latter humour was worse than his former. If Ephraim now spoke he had to endure a fiery sarcasm or a torrent of invective. When a man talks another down with a torrent of words he is using the last argument

of an unreasonable man. Either his position is untenable or he relies on brutal violence. Ephraim had his revenge, however, in making Cowlamb thoroughly miserable; escaping at every opportunity, and, to Moortown company in Moortown publics, half-befuddled Ephraim held up his august father-in-law to ridicule, and even went so far as to give versions of their squabbles. It came to Cowlamb's ears. It incensed him more. The trick of slipping off to Moortown grew upon Ephraim. He was restless at home. He seemed to have acquired a fondness too for drink. Iphis could have communicated many a sorry tale to her father, but, woman-like, she concealed what she could of her husband's lapses. Cowland learned much, but not half. What he did get to know incensed him to fever heat.

The climax came at last. One morning when Cowlamb reached the little house Iphis was busy churning, but Ephraim was nowhere to be seen. Cowlamb was suspicious, for Ephraim generally undertook that task. To

all her father's inquiries Iphis returned anything but explicit answers; until, forced into a corner, Iphis was fain to admit that Ephraim had not risen.

Cowlamb for a moment could not speak for indignation. Early rising with him was a cardinal point, the reverse a deadly sin. Ephraim, who was rising, was a most uncomfortable auditor. He had reached home late the previous night. The fun had been fast and furious, and Ephraim awoke at working time with the penalty of a terrible head. Ephraim stood out of the range of the window as if riveted to the floor, expecting every moment Cowlamb's voice at the stair's foot. But after a volley of vituperative condemnation, and with a threat of showing his authority in some most humiliating manner, the farmer turned on his heel and strode towards home to his breakfast.

Ephraim then ventured to descend, and Iphis, who was at least happy in that her butter had come with little trouble, came into

the kitchen too, and both sat down to breakfast. No words were spoken. Iphis was afraid to tell her husband what had passed; in some way she had a suspicion that he had heard all or most of it. Some feeling of pity stirred her woman's breast. In her heart she knew how much her father had contributed to Ephraim's downward course. At last, when Ephraim rose from the table, he hesitated a moment or two, as if to say something. She had surmised all the breakfast hour that he was turning something over in his mind. He reached the house door as if he could not frame what he wished to say. Then he turned back. She spoke faintly:—

'Where are you going?'

'To Moortown——' he paused again. 'Iphis, you needn't take on if I don't get home to-night.'

'To-night! what call ha' you to be stopping out all night?'

'Well, I want to go to Haveluck.'

'Did you hear father this morning?' asked she faintly again.

'Yis, I did. I can't stand it no longer. I've a sorry time on it. I can't do owt reight to suit him, and if I say a word agean him I git wrong wi' you. We'd no trouble o' this sort at Haveluck—I didn't spree about there. Whose fault is it, I should like to know? I'm not running away from thou,' said he, more tenderly—'I can't and wean't stand it any longer. I'd sooner go back'ards an' for'ards to Haveluck to work week by week; but that wouldn't suit your faither, I knaw. So I'm going to git work agean, if I can, an' if you wean't leave this foul place, you mun stay for what I knaw, bud *I*'ll not stand it no longer. I'll have a house o' my awn, an' ha' no man's interference; I'm tired o' being led by a string.'

Iphis could not bluster as her father would have done. She could not take exception to what Ephraim said, for much of it was truth. He spoke with miserable bitter-

ness, his last evening's frolic no doubt giving him occasion to feel as miserable as he spoke.

'Good-bye, lass, for a bit,' said Ephraim, kissing her before she was aware of his intention.

The sun was rising above a bank of turbulent cloud, gilding the crest, long, low, delicate shades of blue grey, melting into warmer tints of orange upwards; adown the sloping hill sides the trees standing out sharp as silhouettes, and the air keen with a biting frost. The morning and the *contretemps* seemed exactly fitted to each other.

He took a short cut across the fields. He would have gone out of his way to avoid Cowlamb's house. This short cut led him to the side of the railway, and Iphis knew that he would have but little time to spare if he caught the train.

Tears came into Iphis's eyes, seeing her departing errant husband. She had not had time to reason with him, she was so taken aback; she had not wit enough to temporise.

She herself wished now that they had never left Haveluck. But she was not one to sit down and weep over her troubles. She tossed her print bonnet upon her head. There is more than one way of wearing a print bonnet. She wore hers in a coquettish style, the curtain a halo to her back hair, and the front doubled back. She must go to her father and see what was to be done.

Having had his breakfast, Cowlamb was in a much more approachable mood.

'Now, then, has that creatur got up?' asked he with quite a different inflection.

'He's got up an' gone.'

'Gone? Where? Oh, the alehouse again, I'se think.'

'Nay, he hasn't,' said Iphis with some indignation, 'he's gone to the railway station. He's gone to seek for work, an' we're going back to Haveluck if he get's into work there.'

And then Iphis took refuge in copious tears.

If her father was not softened he was

somewhat disconcerted. He had not expected such a *dénouement.* He had not expected such determination in the too easily yielding Ephraim. He looked at Iphis with a puzzled air. Something about her touched him. She had lost something of her roundness; the cares of maternity, her 'stomach for work,' as he termed it, had contributed to the sharpening of features and physique. And yet she was a delightful picture of a young mother, sorrowful and in distress. He was fain to acknowledge to himself that if Ephraim had shown more temper at first, he himself would have been less overbearing and captious. But he allowed the thought to pass, and mixed what he really did not mean with what he did.

'Nay, *thou* hadn't a going, an' he's best away. He'll niver do thee no good. Thou'll get on a dele better be'out him, so mop up thy tears quick'

Iphis ceased weeping, and stared at her father incredulously. She turned as if to go

back—her trouble without alleviation in this quarter.

'Sit down wi' thee,' said Cowlamb, hurriedly, at his wit's end, half afraid she would set off too with her babes on her back. 'I mun see what's to be done.' Then as if to shelve the question, he said encouragingly and hypocritically, 'He'll be back soon, I'll uphold it; he's nobbut done it but to scar' thee, baen, an' he thinks he's goin' to owd sowjer me.'

The farmer's words were lamentably deficient in confidence; Iphis could detect the falsity of the ring.

Just at this moment the subject of all this heartburning had taken his seat in a railway carriage, not at all comfortable with himself, an uneasy impression on his mind that he had been too precipitate. The train was moving; Iphis up at her father's house heard the whistle and the short puffs of the engine.

'He's gone now,' wailed she.

Would it have been a comfort to her to

have realised his misery; that he was lamenting his hot temper? But the die was cast. Had he once looked back and seen the tearful figure watching his departure incredulously, he must have paused to consider whether after all such a step was other than cruel. But he had scrambled over the hedge too full of his own wrongs, all eager to be at the railway station before the train, his thoughts on before him, his legs carrying him on apace as if fear of pursuit added to their impetus.

All the way to Haveluck his only consolation was the thought that his quarrel was not with his wife. He had left her with a kiss and a full explanation; then he felt very heartsick, for the foolish, headstrong fellow did love her most tenderly, and he began to think that he was a good-for-nothing scoundrel after all.

The high tower, the tall masts, the acres of new brick and mortar presented themselves in due succession, not though to him with any honest claim to welcome. There was a slight

straggling advance beyond the old limit, unfinished streets now occupied, and precisely garnished with blinds and door-knockers. He almost felt as if he had been away ten years. He sprang out when the train came to a stand; he had scarcely reached the platform when he felt his arm grasped, and a familiar voice saluted him, 'Now—my—lad, what art ee doin' here?' Ephraim looked round to stare into the face of his tenacious relative, Mr. Bean. What surprised Mr. Bean most was Ephraim clad in his work-day garb—a farmer generally goes smart to market or fair. Mr. Bean waited for Ephraim to explain. But as Ephraim failed to do so, and likewise carried a most dejected, sullen look in his face, the old man began to form some conjecture that something had gone wrong.

'Is anything the matter? If there is, let's be knowing. Time's money wi' me, an' I mun be down in Freeman Street.'

'Th' owd man——,' replied Ephraim, doggedly. 'We can't hit it nohow.'

'I know he mun be maister beast,' acknowledged Mr. Bean somewhat partisanly. 'Bud suer-ly thou hasn't left that fine lass?' added the old man with some concern. 'That'll niver do. Thou hesn't fallen out wi' her suer-ly?'

'No,' declared Ephraim, eagerly; 'I told her we would hev a house in Haveluck agean, an' I'd go back to my trade.'

'Cht! cht! Thou ought to ha' tried to get on wi' Cowlamb. He's getting owd; he's gone off finely these few years, an' who is there for his money? Sam killed hissen wi' drink; t'other son, they tell me, is as bad or worse. Ha' you done a fair thing by Cowlamb?'

Ephraim hung his head, but contrived to stammer forth some of his wrongs.

'Ah, bud you mun go back,' declared Mr. Bean, defying argument. 'This'll niver do. You mun put up wi' th' owd man somehow.'

As Mr. Bean did not suggest the *how*, Ephraim rebelliously affirmed he did not mean to go back. Perversely he said it; only

a few moments before he had been wishing he was back. Mr. Bean had told him his duty without suggesting how he could return with honour. Ephraim had in his mind's eye the sorry figure he should cut returning craven.

'Thou doesn' like facing 'em?' said Bean, shrewdly.

Ephraim scratched his head with a puzzled air.

'Well, sithee, I'll go back wi' thee, an' see what's to be done. I can make it reight, my lad, I know what ails him. An' what art thou going to do? Thou'll maybe get into mischief if thou'rt left to thysen. I'll not lose sight o' thee. Remember thou keeps at my coat tails. Thou can gie me a bed at Willowby?'

The chance *rencontre* and day's fellowship happened fortunately for Ephraim. It consolidated Ephraim's claim upon the well-to-do jobber. Before the day was over Mr. Bean formed the estimate that Ephraim only re-

quired good handling, not 'cross-hopplin.' He was a little taken with the lad's impromptu tongue, his frankness, and open nature. Ephraim might have been the old man's Benjamin, the son of his old age. Mr. Bean's cordiality and confidence went far to dispel the cloud which had overshadowed Ephraim. But Ephraim was a veritable weathercock, full and sanguine, easily exalted and excited, as easily depressed and cast down. This last year of his life seemed to him to have had more ups and downs in it than the whole of his previous existence. He had been poor, ill fed, and ill clad, but he had never felt so utterly despondent and dispirited as during the last twelve months.

'Here, get thee gone,' said Bean, with friendly deprecation; 'get off home to that lass. It's no good thou showing thy face here, thou'd be summuts like a red rag to Cowlamb.'

'You'll come down, uncle—if I ha' to pack——' added Ephraim, with a light laugh,

that rather tickled the old man, because of the rascality lurking in laughter and voice.

'Thou'll none ha' to pack ; I'll uphold it Cowlamb an' me sattles the consarn.'

Bean went in at Cowlamb's gate, and Ephraim proceeded up the lane still further, towards the home he had deserted. But now that he was alone, much of his light-heartedness left him. He felt that he was returning like a prodigal. He was shamefaced at meeting Iphis. He had half a mind to wait in the lane until his relative's interview with Cowlamb was over. But he was uncertain how long Bean would be there, and perhaps Iphis would forgive him less readily if he took his uncle there under present circumstances, without giving her some word of warning.

He would go on ; if she had reproaches it was better to get them over. The more he thought about his abrupt departure, the more contrite he felt. He had not until this day realised how dear to him was the grasp of

those diminutive fists when he held out a finger. When he reached the fields through which he had to pass to reach the house, he unconsciously quickened his pace; his eyes intently fixed before him beheld a tall figure in advance of him; she was in the last field. How excited he became; he began to run, shouting 'Iphis!'

He shouted again and believed himself heard, for she stopped and turned round. As soon as she discerned her recreant husband, she began to retrace her steps to meet him. How thankfully she noticed such a sign of attachment! Breathless, she had no words to inquire the cause of his return, but she saw by certain tokens in his face something had occurred which would disperse all past worries and herald a future which would have in it something of the golden age. He looked into her truthful eyes, round which there were circles red and swollen, as if she had been weeping. He saw no element of reproach in them. Poor lass, the daughter had

merged into the wife Ah, to be under the thumb of an obdurate father! Poor women, poor women, what have not some of them to contend with; their troubles may seem paltry ones, but to them they are of great import!

She held out her arms in passionate entreaty, and Ephraim clasped her to his breast. He could hear her sobbing for joy or in relief; he felt in his own eyes the hot tears of self-reproach, and he vowed and declared that let come what would, he would never desert her again.

CHAPTER 42.

AN EXPLOSION.

The argument of jobber Bean was, no doubt, weighty. Ephraim was to receive more consideration. Moreover, he was to have the land on his own hands—'have his fling,' as Cowlamb remarked to his wife afterwards, make 'ducks and drakes' of his and Bean's money until Bean was tired.

And now the young people thought that they would have no more trials. A few months brought them into the winter. Ephraim almost promised too much, reforming almost too quickly. And Iphis was almost too ready in accepting everything he said, in believing his promises were stable and trustworthy. In the exuberance of her faith she intimated to

her father the good intentions and resolutions of her husband. It would have been harsh to have dashed her faith. Ephraim had been a model husband so far. Some market days he had stayed late, but he had not returned 'market merry' or 'fresh.' But it was not in Cowlamb's nature to be sanguine over backsliders; in chapel when he came to hymns under that head he thought Charles Wesley had less knowledge and perception than he in such matters. A person was incorrigible who once had had his fling. If you gathered him and held him tight, if you coaxed him, it might endure for a season, but he was tolerably certain to break loose again some day. Cowlamb would have suffered Iphis to remain fascinated in her silken web, only she reiterated Ephraim and his sayings and promises so much it irritated him. She was innocent of any such design, but it almost seemed to him as if she was triumphing over him; at last he exclaimed, rather more sadly than impatiently, without meeting her eye, but with

the old, sullen curl of his lip, 'Aye, lass, promises are like pie-crust.'

Iphis, quick to understand her father, refrained from talking further. She was a little grieved, but she thought to herself—

'He's vexed. He thinks I believe everything Ephraim says, before him.'

Still Ephraim continued *sans reproche*. He had always gone Sunday by Sunday to Willowby Chapel, sitting at the end of Cowlamb's pew, Iphis next to him, then Mrs. Cowlamb, her lord at the pew door ready to sally out with his plate when there was a collection. Ephraim had become an exalted person in the eyes of Willowby people of the humbler class who frequented chapel. His old master was exceedingly suave to him. The blacksmith's wife, formerly so careless of his creature comforts, remembered her sins and hated him. Ephraim could tell that by the glint of her eye, and her quailing. Towse and his wife were afraid of looking at him, so high up in the world he had climbed. It was

with a very deferential word they returned Cowlamb's salutation, and the greeting they had for Ephraim was hushed in the presence of his father-in-law. Ephraim's lad acquaintances looked on him with some admiration, his boldness, his audacity, and the ease with which he carried his prosperity, filled them with wonder. There were a few who envied him, and would not be upon speaking terms. They might be diffident, but Ephraim could afford to be careless and set them down as 'no great shakes.' It was a sight for them to see him and Farmer Cowlamb walking home together, Mrs. Cowlamb and Mrs. Sparrow stopping for a little gossip at the chapel gate. Ephraim did not lose an inch of his height, he now wore superfine black cloth and starched linen, and was crowned with a glossy silk hat.

That Ephraim had squabbles with his father-in-law was only too well known, but Ephraim had his own injudicious self to thank for much of that leaking out. But people

seeing the two walking home from chapel so amicably could never believe that their quarrels had ever been serious ones. Farmer Cowlamb carried a stern look, but who ever saw him other than grave and severe? When he did laugh it was to make people uncomfortable. His laughter seemed to have an inflection of something sardonic ; its ring was shrewd and unchallengeable. He was a veritable Barbière with the lax and contemptible. Even when honestly smiling he was never credited with pure fun and humour. How many of us are falsely estimated! I get the demerit of being close, proud, unyielding, never stumbling, simply because I am chary of words. You will speak out, a laugh ever on your lips, and you gain the credit of being open, frank—shall one say it?—a little 'sappy,' easily twisted round a finger. You and I have some mutual confidence. You have told me that I have been 'had' in the matters of crowns and half-sovereigns, that I am too gullible. You know me as well as I know

you. I can come to you and tell you where I have blundered, and where I ought to have spoken. I know your advice is worth taking, and your sympathy still more grateful. If you say a cutting word, your tongue is so glib, it is passed over; if I venture so far I make an enemy. You laugh at the world under cover; the world has no love for me, that is all the difference. Few of us would care to carry in our faces what we really are. One's neighbour has a detestable habit of ridiculing that which is pure, and most of us lack the moral courage to stand up for purity. One might moralise for a day on misunderstanding. Farmer Cowlamb was a misunderstood man in more senses than one, and he knew it, not that that added to his comfort. He felt himself a religious man as far as religion went, but he did not consider that any rascal was privileged to sponge upon him because of his like profession. The farmer was bitter against those members who used their religion to cheapen a bargain, or as a

cloak to go a-borrowing or a-begging, which was much the same thing.

Ephraim, his eyes perhaps opened by his sagacious uncle, discovered this winter that Cowlamb did not go to and from chapel as he used to do. He was slower, and his walking was more laboured. But Cowlamb would not acknowledge his failing powers. Never once did he confide to his son-in-law that he felt the weariness of his years.

Under the new arrangement the farmer did not go down so frequently to Iphis's house. Still he did not cease going entirely; sometimes Ephraim wanted his opinion, Cowlamb would not give it unsolicited. Cowlamb was greatly annoyed because Ephraim employed Towse occasionally, and although he could offer no valid objection to that, Cowlamb almost looked upon Towse being there as a personal affront. He was very sarcastic in his pleasantry with Towse, so much so that Towse, looking after him, would repeat to himself over and over again a seg-

ment of his own philosophy. 'We s'll lig very straight someday, an' maybe wi'in retch.'

If Cowlamb saw anything wrong, it was Iphis he told. If he disapproved of anything he twitted her, but more in sorrow than in anger. Ephraim bought a young blood horse out of an Irish drove. Cowlamb reserved his criticism, but he could not refrain from some cynical pleasantry.

'He'll hunt i' scarlet I'se think?'

'It'll grow into money,' said Iphis, imbued with her husband's sanguine faith.

The horse did improve, and every one considered it not at all a bad investment; but that was not where the mischief lay. So many horsey men from Moortown, fast acquaintances of Ephraim's, came up to look at the young horse that half Ephraim's time seemed to be taken up showing it. They came on a Sunday, some of them, and Cowlamb criticised them as a godless crew, and marked each man. Drawn in, Ephraim again erred, stopping late on market nights, going

down to Moortown other nights, spending inconsequent hours in the day gossiping in butchers' shops or in the streets.

'It'll come to horse-racing next,' remarked Cowlamb, grimly. 'Well, Bean's bound wi' th' creatur, so I shan't lose nowt first year.'

Cowlamb was more and more exasperated when Ephraim refused to sell, and at a good profit.

'First money's best wi' them blood things,' said Cowlamb, with tart acrimony. 'What d'ye know what'll happen? It'll eat its head off. I never knew a hoss farmer die rich.'

'Why,' said Ephraim, naming a great horse dealer, 'they say Stainfield died worth a lot o' money, an' he had nowt but hosses.'

'He was worth more deead than alive then. I once seld him some seed corn. I was two year gittin th' money. But do as you like. I ain't interfered wi' ye much, I think. If you'd wared your money i' cauves——'

And yet Ephraim was obstinate, Iphis trembling. She feared this spider-legged

animal would be the constant source of bickering. When it danced and jumped about she was in nervous fear of her husband's limbs. When Ephraim commenced to break it, her days were days of apprehension, her nights seasons of terror of what might happen on the morrow.

'It's a scattle creatur,' said Cowlamb, uncompromisingly; 'he'll break his neck, that 'll be the end on it.'

But Ephraim did not break his neck, he had too good a seat, and he really seemed clever. But—it was the proximity of the town. Ephraim often came home wild and excited, sometimes late, and this became more and more frequent. Cowlamb began again to renew his practice of walking up to the house to see if Iphis was alone. It was too often the case; but his weary limbs were of less import than Iphis's loneliness.

One night Ephraim had some difficulty opening the gate; the young horse was excited with his rider's handling. He rode up

to the kitchen door, dismounted, and threw in his whip. He knew or suspected that Cowlamb was inside, and Ephraim was in one of his most reckless, daring moods. One would scarcely have believed him the *fainéant* who had formerly got out of Cowlamb's way. The clatter Ephraim made brought out Cowlamb.

'Now, then, thou's got home at last,' said Cowlamb, hotly. 'I think thou might manage thy business better than to land home at this time o' night. Take that thing, an put it up; I owt to ha' been i' bed hours agone.'

'There was nowt to hinder ye,' retorted his son-in-law, saucily.

'Hinder me, thou 'malkin? I can't sattle i' my house wi' this poor lass lone by hersen.'

'Well, I'm at home now, an't ee?' shouted the foolish Ephraim.

'I'm not going to bandy words wi' thee. Take that thing away.' Cowlamb was now by the side of the horse unbuckling the girth,

removing the saddle. 'Now don't forget the bridle.'

Ephraim led the horse away, muttering between his teeth, his words not at all complimentary to his father-in-law. When he returned Cowlamb was just passing through the waggon-gate, Ephraim could just discern his figure in the darkness. Giving way to a feeling of insensate rage, Ephraim picking up the whip, swung it round by the thong. To his own surprise it went into the window. There was a crash, a startled cry from Iphis, and Cowlamb came running back. Taking it for granted that Ephraim was ill-using Iphis, the farmer seized Ephraim by the collar and dragged him out of the door. Allowing for his growing infirmities Cowlamb was yet a powerful man. But it was the spark to Ephraim's excitement—it reached a white heat—he did not succeed for some moments in getting at liberty. Striking out wildly, he in turn grasped Cowlamb by the neckcloth. Ephraim's father and grandfather had been

noted wrestlers in their day. Once upon a time 'russlin' for a kettle' was the last *pièce de résistance* of Easter Monday. It had been a labour of love with Ephraim's father teaching his lads the falls. It came to Ephraim like an instinct. There was a struggle, and Cowlamb fell heavily, Ephraim over him. This sobered Ephraim. Iphis, behind, stood wringing her hands imploring peace.

'Lift him up!' cried she, plaintively. 'What has it all been about? Oh, father, he didn't do it on purpose. Ephraim, do help me!'

Ephraim was only too eager now to repair his error. Cowlamb seemed unconscious, but the moment he felt the touch of his antagonist he spurned Ephraim as though he were foul or unclean.

'Thou scoundrel to down an' owd man,' gasped Cowlamb with difficulty. 'Lord if I was nobbut a year or two younger I'd twilt thee yit.'

'Father, he didn't do it o' purpose. Did you, Ephraim?' appealed Iphis.

'Ho'd thy noise. He choked me down, the scoundrel,' declared Cowlamb. 'He kicked me, he tripped me up.'

Ephraim did not speak, not even to contest the priority of seizure. Although he felt that he was not the aggressor, he did not feel himself blameless.

Cowlamb gathered himself up, vowing future vengeance. Iphis declared again and again that there was no cause for his return; the breaking of the window was unpremeditated, an accident; that Ephraim had not ill-treated her; but this the choleric man did not seem as if he could grasp.

Iphis's mind was in too dazed or too tumultuous a state for her to commence heaping reproaches on her husband. Moreover, she saw that her father, too prone to place Ephraim at the lowest, had really commenced the fray. She was some moments an eye-witness before she comprehended the struggle,

then, hearing them go down, she was fearful that her father was injured. Seeing him rise to his feet she did not apprehend anything more serious than more embittered feeling in her father s breast. This to her was no slight matter, and she could not sleep for her thoughts concerning the unfortunate occurrence.

CHAPTER 43.

STRUCK DOWN.

THE farmer did not come down the following morning ; but this Iphis did not wonder at so much. But Iphis was somewhat troubled when she saw Sarah, her mother's servant, enter the house.

'Missis wants you 'm,' said Sarah, 'and I'm to stay while you're away, if you're busy.'

'How's father this morning?' asked Iphis.

'He's poorly 'm. He hasn't got up.'

Iphis was chilled. She had never known her father have an illness to confine him to his room. She hoped that he, like some people who have never experienced much illness, was not so unwell as he believed himself to be.

'Oh, you've come,' said Mrs. Cowlamb, calmly. Iphis was relieved. Her mother could not be so collected if anything was seriously wrong. 'Your father's poorly. I don't know what's amiss with him. He's been off his heead. Sam used to be that with his drinkin', fancying he seed all sorts o' folks making faces at him. I nobbut hed to do wi' him once, an' there he was getting under the bed, and saying, "Lord if I git ower this, niver no more." But it's been up an' down, up an' down. I ain't hed a dele o' sleep.'

'But father niver drinks anything,' said Iphis.

'No, it can't be with drink. He's been raving about Ephraim, an' feighting at him. That was his fancy. I thowt I should have to have somebody in. But he's better than he was. I sent down for a doctor, but he hesn't come up. Has Ephraim been aggravating him agean? What's it all about. D'ye knaw?'

Iphis related to her mother what had happened.

'Father was wrong, mother. He come back in a rage. He thought Ephraim was ill-using me. Ephraim broke the window with his whip, made father come back. I shouldn't have cared, but the gell seed it all. I'd kept her up to help me, an' they will talk so. There's no telling what sorts o' tales 'll start. She'll tell Sarah everything, I expect.'

'Your faither was very well yisterday morning when he got up. But i' th' middle o' th' morning he come an' reckoned he was nearly starved down. I set him afore a roosing fire, and he went off then as if he'd no use in his limbs, an' as if he was fast asleep. I thowt he'd got a bad cowd, and that's what's my opinion is the matter wi' him, an' makes him so foul-tempered.'

The conversation of mother and daughter was cut short by the arrival of the Moortown doctor. Iphis was left alone in the kitchen, the doctor and Mrs. Cowlamb going upstairs. We all know what that period is when we

wait for the opinion of one who knows or ought to know. Is there danger—is there cause for anxiety?

But Iphis was not in any deep anxiety. She knew what a fine constitution her father had. What a strong enduring man he had been. How free he had been from any ailment. His temper and his fall had unhinged him for a time, she thought.

But she became more concerned when she saw the doctor's face looking grave, and her mother appearing almost helpless. It was not so much the expression of apprehensive fear in Mrs. Cowlamb's face, as wonder and concern as to how she would get on with a sick man in the house. She could quite comprehend Iphis being ill and nursing her out of her weakness—but her husband, the thought of him ever being dangerously ill had never entered her head.

The doctor uttered some words in a low tone, which Mrs. Cowlamb seemed as if she failed to understand. A shade of annoyance

or contempt ruffled the serenity of the doctor's face.

'If you do not think yourself equal to it,' said he, 'I can get you a nurse from Treminster; but you will have to pay her.'

'What do you say, Iphis?' appealed Mrs. Cowlamb. 'It'll be expensive; there'll be her board.'

Iphis did not look or listen to her mother. She turned to the doctor with a searching look, her features tense with supplication.

'How is father? Is he so bad?'

'He must not get up. I am afraid I cannot give you much hope; he may rally for a time. I will look in again. Mrs. Cowlamb says he was taken ill yesterday morning.'

'He was starved down,' interrupted Mrs. Cowlamb; 'I set him before a roosing fire.'

'He ought to have had a warm bath. I won't say he has not a chance, but he has not come to the worst. His head is bad; he has had some excitement; he must be

kept quiet; he must be nursed, he may turn delirious again. You must have some one able to cope with him if he should be violent; but I apprehend another phase, unconsciousness. Has he had any trouble or anxiety of late?'

'I will nurse him!' said Iphis, not heeding the doctor's question. 'Mother, you must let Sarah go yonder!'

'It 'll be a strange bother to me having to do wi'out a gell. There's the milking an' there's the butter to make up. I hardlins knaw what I shall do.'

'You can get one of the labourers' wives to milk. I can make up the butter. I'll go up and see how father is.'

'He is awake. I'll send down some medicine,' said the doctor, preparing to depart.

Iphis entered her father's chamber noiselessly. At first she thought he was asleep, but he opened his eyes and spoke, almost startling her with his abruptness.

'Now then!'

'How are you, father?'

'I'd knaw. Bad enow, yon doctor seems to think by his face,' said Cowlamb, bitterly. 'If I hadn't bad, I shall be. It's all i' my heead,' complained he. His hand lay across one eye and one side of his temples, as if he was compressing there some acute pain which almost rendered him senseless.

'You'll soon be better, father; I'm coming to nurse you.'

'My lass,' said the farmer, without bitterness now, 'I think it's come for my end. I've been bad afore i' my heead, but I said nowt. The doctor 'll tell you what they call it; it seems they hev got a name for it.'

Iphis recollected that she had seen her father with his handkerchief to the side of his head. She had thought it was toothache he was suffering from.

'Ephraim hasn't to do wi' your heead being bad, father. I'm suer he didn't mean to down you. He says so. He fell hissen.'

'Atop o' me,' said Cowlamb sourly, unconvinced.

'May he come up and see you?'

'No; I weant ha' the creatur. He may stop at home an' gie th' babs pap.'

'Well, father, I s'll go home, but I'll come back.'

'Thou needn't,' deprecated he. 'Thy mother can manage, I'se think.'

'They've been talking of a nurse coming from Treminster.'

'But I weant hev a nurse,' said Cowlamb, with some asperity. 'Well, thou come back then, I'll ha' no strange women about me. I hate strange faces. The lass mun go yonder.'

When Iphis reached her own house Ephraim had deserted it.

'Did he go on the young horse?' asked Iphis of her mother's servant.

'No 'm,' said Sarah.

'Which way did he go?'

Sarah pointed across the stackyard. Iphis felt faint at heart. Ephraim had gone to join

his Moortown friends. End his compunction in a carouse perhaps.

Iphis returned to her father's house trying to keep up a brave heart. She found her father sleeping. For the first time she observed the insidious approach of age. The eyeballs showed through the transparent eyelids, the mouth was fallen, the muscles of the face drawn and flaccid. His hair had gone thinner, and the crown of his bald head did not glow with healthy colour. It seemed to Iphis that she had seen all this a long time, but had not rightly comprehended.

When he awoke again he was not in his right mind. He was not violent, simply wandering. His anxiety was all about Sam. And Sam was dead and gone.

Her mother left everything to her. Mrs. Cowlamb could not be brought to see that her husband was in a critical state, and yet she seemed dazed and helpless. The doctor, who came in the afternoon, regarded her with

some disgust. His opinion of the mistress of the house did not improve. The woman, he thought, did not care much for her husband —was, perhaps, counting on freedom when he was gone—freedom and so much a year. The doctor was not a dull student; he understood character. He perfectly grasped the ambition of such a woman—a house in Moortown or Treminster with one servant—a lack-lustre life, and lonely—her mind solely occupied with keeping her house spotless, going to chapel, and having a tray at tea meetings.

The good doctor looked upon Iphis with kindly eyes—he commiserated her. He could be grave, he could be full of fun, jolly or kindly, as occasion served or demanded. He spoke to her in a confiding way.

'I am afraid—he is quite rational now. Mr. Cowlamb has a son. Had he not better be sent for?'

'Tom. Oh, he will come, I should think, if he is only at home. But you don't think

he will die, sir? Oh, do not say, doctor, he will die!'

'My dear girl, we are all of us in God's hand. Send for your brother, but keep up a brave heart. I shall come on again to-night.'

'What a girl!' murmured the doctor to himself, as he got up into his low car beside his servant; 'she is one in ten thousand!'

What was it her father said when she entered his room? She could have ridiculed the sincere doctor. She was half inclined to send after him, to have him brought back to note the improvement that had taken place in the short time that had elapsed from the doctor coming down into the kitchen. Her father's eye was bright, his manner lucid, he looked more like the Farmer Cowlamb of a year ago.

'Why, father,' cried she, jubilantly, 'you look ever so much better!'

'I am a good dele better,' returned he, complacently. 'I feel a lot better. I think I s'll git up. I'm sick o' liggin' here.'

'Oh, father, hadn't you better keep in bed?'

'The doctor said if I was well enough I mud git up. I heerd him.'

'You shall have your chair up here. You shan't go downstairs. I'm here, you know, to see after you.'

'Heigh. Thou allus maisters me,' returned he.

She did not dare to look at him; it would be like questioning whether he spoke in jest or earnest.

She felt a thrill, nevertheless.

When he was up, he began to chafe, to wonder if things were going on all right, if his foreman was keen enough. He then relapsed, with the conviction that it was well to have this 'badly bout' in winter time; it was a less important time to the farmer.

'Here's them fallows — send foreman word——'

'Oh, niver mind, father; I'll see about

iverything. I know as much about farming as plenty o' men.'

'A sight more,' said Cowlamb, with a proud eye, tremulous after he had spoken.

She had lit a fire in the bed-room grate. He sat by it with his greatcoat on. Not a man who cared to read, he could not while his time away. He soon became as weary of sitting there, even with Iphis for company, as he had been weary of bed.

'What time is it, Iphis?' The gloom was gathering round. 'I s'll be glad when days begin to be longer.'

Iphis looked at her watch. 'Five o'clock,' she said.

'The doctor 'll be coming by-and-by. Humph! I think we could ha' done be'-out him. He'll change my med'cine, I'se think.'

The farmer, in common with many more mortals, had a great faith in his own shrewdness. Changing the medicine—it was a trick of the doctors fighting a complaint. They

got at it on both sides, and it was kill or cure in a 'quick-sticks.' He became more cheerful, ate with a little appetite. Nothing substantial until now had passed his lips.

Iphis recovered hope, and went so far as to believe the doctor much too apprehensive. She thought her father was so much better she could run on home. In the dusky light she fancied that she saw some one before her walking with uncertain gait; but the more she hurried the more the figure before her increased speed. She knew that it was Ephraim, and he showed only too plainly how his day had been spent.

Sarah beheld him with affright. Ephraim was most jocose and foolish in his talk, full of boastfulness.

'Do you mind staying?' asked Iphis of the girl, hesitatingly. She felt that she could hardly expect the girl to be willing. Sarah hesitated, she did not like to be thought 'sore-boned.'

'Father is better,' added Iphis.

'If you please 'm I would rather go down yonder,' said the girl, relieved.

'Well, Sarah,' said Iphis, considerately. 'Maybe you'd better go back. But if anything happens you'll come up and tell me. I'll bring the babies an' leave him in the house by hissen.'

The girl was not good at subterfuges. Mrs. Cowlamb gathered it as if Ephraim's dereliction was likely to be of advantage to herself. It really was not so, but Mrs. Cowlamb, naturally of a carping spirit, could not help the tendency to regard her fellow creatures in the worst possible light.

What could she say when the farmer asked after his daughter, what was keeping her? The doctor had been up, and had not regarded the farmer with so much approval. He had not expressed ill foreboding, but is it not half the battle getting people to believe themselves mending? Anyhow, Cowlamb was ordered to get into bed.

'Where's Iphis?' asked Cowlamb again.

'She's stopping at home to-night.'

'I thowt Sarah was to go there.'

'She's come back.'

The farmer paused a moment, thinking it over. He looked up with a glint of temper in his eyes.

'That creatur's not fit to be seen.'

'I think he was a bit fresh. He's been at Moortown agean.'

'She mud ha' browt th' babs up here. He mud ha' been left by hissen. Them that's nowt happen nowt. If he set hissen on fire, so long as it didn't harm other folks it wouldn't matter much. He's going to be a matler to Sam. He'll hev a regular randy-boose now I'm laid by.' When he thought of Sam his bitterness changed to misery.

'I'll hev *her* made suer,' he muttered to himself. 'I wish I'd known afore he'd gone.' He meant the doctor. 'Is there a man about?' inquired he. 'One of th' lads can take a message down to the town.'

'Why,' ventured Mrs. Cowlamb, 'I thowt you had made iverything reight!'

'Heigh?' queried Cowlamb, sharply. 'I know what I'm about, as the lad said, "I never was weller i' my life."'

The thin old joke brought up a grim smile on his face, and Mrs. Cowlamb's eagerness was crushed. In her heart she was desperately anxious that *she* should be made right. She did not wish Iphis to be entirely independent of her. Her inward ejaculation had often been—'I don't want that lass to crob ower me!'

She listened. She was rewarded for her diligence. Cowlamb would have the waggoner go up to his room, but Mrs. Cowlamb had insisted that the lad should unlace and disencumber himself of his boots before ascending. She followed the lad up noiselessly, but she had not counted upon her husband's sensitive ear. He heard the bed-room door opposite his pushed one way or the other. He had a sardonic gleam of spitefulness

in his face when he cried to her with point—

'Thou'll ha' to be taken in a carriage to the Union.'

A reckless farmer's widow resorted to this expedient to compel her close-fisted father-in-law to do something for herself and children. It happened when they were at Snailhorn; at one time the affair had often been recounted by Cowlamb. His wife's wretched espionage revived the memory of it. He was not wounded with this revelation of her character. He, a shrewd man, had not lived all these past years with her for nothing. He knew every turn of her narrow mind. Common report was answerable for the story that she had cast off the plough lad, tempted by the brilliant future of a well-to-do farmer's wife. Perhaps there had lingered in the farmer's mind the reflection that he had not been the first in her heart.

Iphis appeared in the morning almost before it was daylight. A raw, searching

morning, with dull thick sky, not threatening rain, but one of those mornings in the early year which gives one gloomy and lugubrious thoughts.

'How is father?' her first question naturally.

'He's been bad agean—off 'n his heead. He seems to be reight now, but his heead's full o' pain.'

'I wish I had come up again. Is he awake?'

'Yes. He ast after thee last night.'

Iphis hurried up. When she opened the door she was aghast at the change. His eyes were closed, but he had the certain seal of death upon his features. At least it struck her so. She had never before seen any one die. Sam had died by her side, but she had not been watching for his death, nor expecting it. She noticed how her father's fingers were restless, tremulously fingering, clutching here and there. She had never seen this, but she had heard it related over and over again

that when it came to this the last frail hope was knocked away.

She spoke in a whisper.

'Father?'

He heard her but did not open his eyes; he smiled and answered her, but so low that she had to bend over him to hear. He spoke a little louder when he inquired impatiently—'Isn't that lawyer come yit? I wish he'd come.'

'Oh, never mind him, father; keep quiet.'

'Bud I do mind him—an' I mind thou.'

'Father, may Ephraim come up to see you? He told me this morning he would like. He'll beg pardon or owt.'

'No,' said Cowlamb, stolidly. There was no smile, but no frown. Inwardly Ephraim's desire to humble himself was not unwelcome news.

'You don't malice him, father?'

'No, not I,' said Cowlamb, dubiously. 'It was a mistake thou says—o' mine.'

Iphis scarcely knew whether her father

was twitting her. She thought it best to let the matter drop.

After a time Cowlamb spoke again.

'I wonder if Tom knows I'm so badly. I wish he was here.'

'We wrote to him day afore yisterday.'

'He'd be at Treminster market, maybe. He'd some gimmers[1] to sell. What time is it?'

'Half-past seven.'

'Them lawyers lig i' bed till nine or ten.'

Iphis could see that her father would not rest until that was off his mind, so she said—

'Is the waggoner to go down agean?'

'Heigh! Tell 'em if they an't here in an hour I'll get somebody else—that'll fetch 'em, Iphis. Them sort o' folks are allus in for putting off, an' dragging things on week after week. Why can't they sattle one thing afore they begin on another?'

Iphis believed that he was talking too much. She made no remark. After a few

[1] Year old female sheep.

moments she spoke tenderly—'I would try and get a bit o' sleep, father. Does your head pain you?'

'It's done that ever since I got i' th' bed bottom, lass. I fancy I can feel it when I'm asleep, but I nobbut doze.'

'I'll go down an' send——'

'Heigh, my lass, that's reight. Tell 'em we'll hev somebody else. But come back agean. Thou mun git a bit o' breakfast first, happen thou's hed nowt yit.'

CHAPTER 44.

IN EXTREMIS.

When Iphis entered the bed-room again she found her father dozing, now and again incoherent words issuing feebly from his lips. He seemed so irrational and odd, Iphis was afraid. At first she stood by, regarding him silently with apprehensive concern. She thought his mind must be seriously affected. She could scarcely believe that he could ever become clear again. Sam had talked wildly in his bad fits, was violent, imagining an old hag was before him, making horrible grimaces at him. When Sam got better he talked about his tormentor as if she really had a personality, for he used to declare that 'he should know her anywhere.' But Sam's disordered brain was due to his own misconduct,

her father had never been given to excess. She had been impatient and disgusted with Sam; but he lying there was suffering through trouble and vexation of spirit, caused partly by her own headstrong wilfulness. It had aged him and perhaps was shortening his days. A flood of self-reproach almost overwhelmed her. So far she could not tell what was troubling him—then at last she did catch something more complete. He was in distress.

'When I get bigger I'll work for you, mother.'

He thought he was the child, seeing his poverty-stricken mother succumbing to her trials. Iphis remembered the pitiful story he had once told her of his mother's hard struggle with the world. She could not forget the realism of the picture her father had brought before her mind. He had wished to dissuade her from a false step. She could comprehend that now. She remembered only too well the shock she experienced when he

asked her how she would face such a life of misery.

'Father,' she whispered, bending over him, 'I am here.'

Her voice recalled him to himself.

'Art ee ?—oh—' murmured he, wearily. 'I must ha' been dreaming. I thowt I was a baen agean. It's a soft way to be in. I seem to knaw sometimes I'm off 'n my heead an' I can't pull mysen thegither nohow. Has that chap got back?'

'No, he hesn't been gone long.'

'The owd doctor 'll be here t'reckly. I think I'm worse.'

The talking had evidently exhausted him. The lucid interval was over. He was again dimly conscious. Nor had he recovered when the doctor came. The doctor was not one whit surprised. He shook his head sadly.

'Poor fellow!' sympathised he. 'He is a wreck of what he once was. How a few weeks pull down a man—a few days even!

He has had a wonderful mind. But it has been overstrained lately.'

'Will he get better?' asked Iphis, plaintively.

'My dear, I cannot give you any hope. Has he any affairs to settle? If he has, you must take advantage of the next time his mind is clear.'

Iphis heard some stir below. She opened the chamber door, and listened. The waggoner had returned, some one with him.

Iphis went downstairs.

'Who is it? Is it the lawyer?' asked she of her mother.

'Yes—Mr. Burnett,' replied Mrs. Cowlamb with an eagerness that almost shocked Iphis.

'He musn't go away. He must stop while father comes round again. The doctor says so.'

'Thou'd better tell him that thysen.'

Iphis found her mother had lit a fire in the best room and ushered the lawyer in

there. Already he had drawn a chair near the fire, and, with his feet on the sacred fender, was staring into the fire somewhat vacantly.

He was a brusque fat man, but not unkindly. Not much intelligence gleamed out of his surcharged face. His small eyes had an element of dull stupidity in them, but somehow the very stupidity of them claimed forbearance.

'How d' do, Mrs. Sparrow?' said Mr. Burnett, endeavouring to meet his client's daughter easily and considerately. Although accustomed to such calls, he, being a fat, healthy man, always felt himself out of place in a house of sickness.

Iphis repeated almost word for word what she had said to her mother.

'Is Doctor Swan here?' the lawyer inquired.

'He is upstairs with father.'

'Perhaps I had better be there too—I

should be ready. At such times one must be prompt.'

He came nearer to her, and Iphis led the way. She thought his suggestion sensible.

Lawyer Burnett and Doctor Swan met as if they had met before under similar circumstances. The two men each took a chair on either side of the fire-grate. Iphis went and sat by the bed. All were silent for some moments, Iphis with anxious, devoted eyes watching every flickering movement on her father's face, listening to his breathing, the men regarding her occasionally with sidelong glances. At last, the two men commenced talking in an undertone, first in a whisper, about Cowlamb and his malady, merging into encomiums on his past career and character. Iphis could hear them, could distinguish what was said. Then they got to talking of other things quite foreign—their last social meeting, the Moortown vicar and his tithe troubles—and Iphis felt that she had

no business now to follow their conversation. At last she heard the lawyer whisper—

'Swan, I had some grapes sent me from Saxonby. Canty sent me them. They came last night in a paper box, and they have never been taken out. Mrs. Sparrow,' said the lawyer, turning to Iphis, 'could you send any one down to my house for a box of grapes?'

'Oh, it's too good of you, sir!' deprecated Iphis.

'No—don't think such a thing.'

Iphis left her father's bedside to send off a messenger. When she returned the doctor was by the bed and the lawyer attentive, some conversation again passing between them, which was broken off at sight of Iphis. She carried a small tray, on which was a spirit bottle, a jug of water, a sugar basin, and a couple of tumblers. Noiselessly she placed them on a small old-fashioned oak stand.

The lips of both men curled, a smile;

the self-same thought occurring to each. Iphis meant to return the compliment.

'Really I'm—oh dear, you should not have given yourself so much trouble,' said the doctor.

'It's almost too soon to begin with brandy,' said the other, his point amusing himself. Nevertheless he took the bottle and poured some of the spirit into a glass for himself. Then he prepared to help the doctor, without looking up, muttering—

'Now, Swan——'

'There,' whispered the doctor, as a signal for him to stop.

'Say when!' whispered the lawyer, water-jug in hand.

'When,' echoed the doctor, in a whisper, and the water-jug was gently deposited on the tray.

They sat again what seemed to be a long time, the doctor from time to time looking at his watch. The brandy and water seemed somewhat a bar to conversation. Both sat

silent, both thinking—the lawyer wishing he was below, or out of doors with one of the thick cigars he had in his pocket between his lips.

The grapes came and were brought up-stairs by Mrs. Cowlamb, who stayed in the room a few minutes. When the lawyer cut the string Iphis and her mother left the room.

The lawyer took up some white paper and called his friend's attention to the box.

'They're fine,' said the doctor, as the grapes were revealed with the papilionaceous down on their fat spheres.

'They'd tempt an angel,' said the lawyer. 'Here, Swan,' said he, 'he'll not want them all.'

When Iphis returned, they were each still occupied in breaking off grapes and blowing the stones into the fire.

'Take some, Mrs. Sparrow. There is a quantity of them. I can get more readily.

I have only to drop a note to a friend of mine.'

Iphis declined, but the lawyer persisted.

'Yes, do,' said the doctor, 'they are very fine. Your father is sleeping very nicely now. He will wake presently, I hope.'

Cowlamb awoke at last, but his mind was not yet clear. He scarcely seemed to comprehend what was said to him. He seemed to comprehend who were in the room, but the pain in his head, although now gone, had stupefied him.

'I shall be right t'reckly, doctor,' said Cowlamb, conscious of his weakness.

The doctor waited, scarcely able to repress his impatience. He was almost afraid the farmer would sink with his last wishes unaccomplished. The fingers again became busy with the coverlid ; he lay uneasily, his head moving to and fro with weak will.

'Can't you give him something ?' asked the lawyer, anxiously.

'No——, not to do him any real good. I could to send him off again. His head won't bear it. We want him clear. Here, Mrs. Sparrow,' said he, taking the grapes, 'squeeze them into his lips.'

Iphis eagerly obeyed, and the dying man as eagerly sucked in the grateful juice, his lips parting for refreshment, and by and by he seemed to come to himself, and recognise the doctor and Burnett and Iphis ministering to him. The doctor was quick to observe Cowlamb lucid and eager.

'Now then, Burnett, are you ready?'

Cowlamb nodded gratefully.

'He is perfectly clear in his mind now, I can vouch for that. You understand me, Mr. Cowlamb? Mr. Burnett is here, you recognise him?'

'Heigh,' whispered Cowlamb, 'I'm all reight agean. You can all stop if you like,' said he, seeing Iphis preparing to go, and the doctor with her.

'I think they had better go,' said the

lawyer; 'they can return as soon as I have had your instructions.'

'Very well,' muttered Cowlamb, with some reluctance. He was not satisfied if Iphis was out of the room.

Iphis and the doctor stood upon the landing. They could hear the lawyer, but they could not hear Cowlamb. Then there were pauses, and they could hear the scratch of the pen. No word passed between them. Then they heard the lawyer reading, pause, then for the first time they heard the farmer's weak voice.

'Here, doctor, Mrs. Sparrow, you can come in.'

'We had better have it attested,' said the lawyer, turning to his friend; 'the sooner the better. Mr. Cowlamb has desired you and me to be in the trust. I didn't come out to ask you; under the circumstances I knew you would. There are four. Mr. Cowlamb's son is one; the other, he may refuse to act, he lives at some distance. We must have some

witnesses. I might have brought one of my clerks, but I did not think of making it out here.'

'We shall want some one who can write his name.'

'There's the waggoner, he can write, and there's Foster,' suggested Iphis. 'Father has had Foster since his farm was sold away from him. He's a sort of foreman, and he looked after the implements and fencing; he was browt up to a trade, and he's a good scholar. Father gives him thirty shillings a week.'

Cowlamb lay with his eyes closed; both men noticed that when they looked to see if he was listening or taking any interest, Cowlamb opened them.

'Couldn't have a better man. They had better be sent for—— Give your father some of those grapes.'

'A little brandy and water,' said the doctor, 'it will stimulate him. He will bear it now.'

Iphis hurried downstairs, and found

Foster below, thanks to Mrs. Cowlamb's foresight.

'Send Sarah for waggoner,' said Iphis, hurriedly. 'Foster, you come upstairs.'

Foster was looking somewhat dismal. The demise of Farmer Cowlamb was sure to affect him. He had found servitude under the farmer much easier than his former position of a crofter, paying heavy rental for poor land. He waited on the landing until the waggoner arrived. Joe the waggoner came at last, somewhat nervous and impressed.

The will was signed and witnessed, Foster's caligraphy scarcely showing the culture he had credit for. But he was collected, and comprehended what was required of him. As for Joe, he was greatly flurried, and had to follow the lawyer's finger. But there it stood at last, it might have been out of his last copy-book, for Joe took praiseworthy pains.

'You've got some glasses there,' said Cowlamb, faintly. He looked towards each

man. 'You'll ha' some brandy an' watter. Tell your mother to set 'em out some lunch. Mr. Burnett, you'll have a glass,—now doctor? Come, don't be back'ard; fall to. Iphis, some glasses, my lass.'

'This is my glass,' said the lawyer.

'Then, this is mine,' said the doctor.

'Oh, Lord!' said Cowlamb, faint with speaking, in despair at the paucity of materials handy, 'Thou mud ha' browt four; I like a clean glass; we hadn't short o' glasses, suerly.'

'No, no. We have had these glasses before; they will do. It is all right, Mr. Cowlamb; don't distress yourself.'

The doctor looked meaningly at the man Foster, who drank off his glass quickly, receiving a look of thanks for his intelligence. 'Here, Joe,' whispered Foster, 'we're better out now.'

Poor Joe, with all his desire to be as noiseless as a cat, made a horrible clatter passing out, kicking the skirting board

as he blundered out of the room. Mrs. Cowlamb, below, hearing him, bewailed the condition in which she would find her staircase after all this tramping up and down was over. Why had she not insisted upon them taking off their boots ? She lamented her oversight, but she had so much to think of.

'Everything's made reight, Mr. Burnett ? You're suer there's no gap onybody could creep thruff ?' Cowlamb was experiencing greater weakness, but he had a great anxiety that there should be no quibble arise after he was gone.

'It is exactly as you have wished.'

'That'll do. I shan't want to alter it. Who browt them grapes, Iphis ?'

'Mr. Burnett sent to his house for them.'

'I'm suer it was a great kindness,' said Cowlamb, tears in his eyes.

'I can get you more,' said Burnett.

'Thank ye, sir. It's good o' you. I think they'll last me out.'

'Wait a bit, Burnett, you may as well ride down with me,' murmured the doctor.

'I'll wait below then. Good morning, Mr. Cowlamb. Good morning, Mrs. Sparrow.'

The lawyer heard Cowlamb's faint reply. 'Good-bye, Mr. Burnett.' Cowlamb retained his hand a moment, and the lawyer felt that his client was bidding him farewell.

Cowlamb could hear the rattle of the wheels.

'They're goan. We s'll ha' the doctor agean. I like th' owd doctor; Burnett's such a fat, sleepy-headed beggar. I'm suer them grapes did me a power o' good.'

'Can you take any of your med'cine? The doctor said you were to have a dose as soon as you could take it.'

'I mud as well. I've got one thing off my mind, but I feel so tired; I feel just as if I wanted to go to sleep an' couldn't, an' th' pain i' my heead agean, enough to craze one.'

Iphis held him the wine glass and he drank off the contents with an effort, sinking back heavily. Iphis sat by him and watched him off into an apparent slumber. She left him now and again, once to go downstairs, and still he slept on. Iphis at length became suspicious that the doctor was answerable for this heavy sleep.

Towards noon he awoke, only to relapse again into that painful unconsciousness. If ever a gleam of light reached him it was to complain of pain. Then at last the pain left him, but after, there was a strange rattling noise in his throat, and Iphis called out loudly for her mother. Foster was sent off on the old horse to the town. It might be three o'clock in the afternoon. All the doctors in the town were out. Foster's instructions were to bring some one. Iphis was in a frenzy.

But the farmer was past all aid. Every breath was drawn with effort. He would be clear for a moment or two, then unconscious.

Conscious or unconscious, Iphis still pressed the grapes to his lips, and the dying man, even when most vacant, sucked in the juice with the eagerness of a famishing soul. Iphis lay on the bed in a delirium of grief, calling upon him, beseeching his forgiveness. In his lucid moments he was all tenderness; his weak arm somehow finding its way to her side.

'My poor little lass!' murmured he, pityingly. 'Where's Ephraim? Send for him, do see. I should like to see the lad—where is he? He—owt ta be here. I—I want—to —tell him——'

But the sentence was not finished. What did Cowlamb wish to tell Ephraim? That he had made Iphis 'reight,' because he only feared that her husband would make ducks and drakes of her money? Or was it that he now repented of having put this between husband and wife; or was it to tell Ephraim that he had been ailing long, and the lad was not to lay his father-in-law's death at his

door; or that he had been in the wrong himself; that perhaps he had been too harsh and exacting? God only knew. Perhaps he had something of all this to say, seeing at his last hour clearly where a man stumbles and is the cause of stumbling to others. Ah, is not life a tale of human weakness and penitence! He was too full of the muddle of life to make even an edifying deathbed for the minister's capital the Sabbath after.

Mrs. Cowlamb was most troubled at that. Iphis chose to think that the Almighty hears the voice of penitence without any go-between. Her father had breathed his last in charity with all men. She treasured this thought.

Mrs. Cowlamb now put on the grief of a widow in Israel. Her order to the girl to draw down the blinds was given in the most agonised tone. She already felt the weeds about her face. She was truly concerned, her husband had succumbed, but it was not in her nature as in Iphis's to feel her loss acutely. She was troubled at the world's verdict, her

husband dying without a minister being called in. But he had sunk so rapidly, and to her so unexpectedly, there had been time little enough to think of one. Moreover, he was too often unconscious or racked with pain to be able to listen to any one's ministrations.

'It's Tom!' said Iphis, tearfully; 'he's just got here too late.'

'Wilt thou go down an' tell him? Nay, I'll go.'

Cowlamb's son's face was grave.

'I'm too late, I saw the blinds were down. The lass was pulling the last down as I got up to the gate. It's sudden—ower sudden,' said he, his face darkening.

'He hasn't been laid by long,' acknowledged Mrs. Cowlamb, 'but we sent for you day afore yesterday.'

'Ay,' replied he, 'but I went from Treminster Market to a fair in Stoneshire. I nobbut got home this morning, and I changed my horse there and then and drove to the station. But what's it all about? I heard

a strange tale in the train. Has there been any foul play ?'

'Foul play ?' gasped Mrs. Cowlamb.

'What's all this quarrel about ? They didn't know me or they'd ha' been more mealy-mouthed. I' the town there it's common talk. Few know me hereabouts. I heard 'em talking o' the Magistrates taking it up.'

Iphis stood on the staircase. She could hear every word.

'I thought—I didn't know what to think —I didn't know what you meant,' stammered Mrs. Cowlamb. 'I don't know. Maybe Ephraim and him did fall out. They was allus dead set agean one another. I'd know which was worst.'

He regarded her sternly. He did not like her manner. What occasion had she to gloss things over ? Ah! he thought, Iphis!

'Let *me* have the truth. What I heard was that he had been downed and——kicked.'

Iphis now appeared, her face bloodless,

her eyes fearless and defiant. Her brother looked at her seriously, not vindictively. His expression was yet affectionate and kindly. Her resentment against him sank, but rose against others.

'It's that nasty nurse lass been spreading all sort o' tales. I know, Tom, I'll tell you how it all was. The doctor knows it isn't so.'

And Iphis related to her brother the unfortunate collision between her father and her husband.

'I can believe *thou*. But if I was Ephraim, I wouldn't care to stand in his shoes if nowt comes on it.'

Her brother went up with her into the chamber where his dead father lay.

'If the quarrel had been a month since I could ha' forgiven him better,' said he, sadly. 'It's a bad business altogether.'

CHAPTER 45.

A VERDICT.

As soon as she could get away Iphis hurried down to her own home. She wished to see her babies—to see how they were being treated by the labourer's wife who had gone into her house for a day or two—to see how Ephraim bore himself, and to give him some warning of the talk which had got about.

The truth to tell, Ephraim had experienced some shy looks in Moortown, had heard some ominous whispers ; and, with that night so fresh in his memory, he almost believed it himself that he had hastened his father-in-law's death. Cowlamb fell heavily, he remembered. He would have felt easier in his mind could he but have unburthened

himself. But to convict himself, to confess his miserable torturing to his wife, Cowlamb's own and only daughter, she would be sure to regard him with horror, and he dare not make a confidant of any one else.

'It's that mucky lass you kep up that night,' said Ephraim with hopeless, despairing calmness.

'I've teld you,' said Iphis, as if, fairly warned, he must get up the best defence he could. 'Now I must go. There'll be a lot to see after. Tom's just come. We should niver ha' known o' th' talk going on at Moortown, an' maybe at Willowby, but for him. He heerd it i' th' train.'

'An' what does he say?' inquired Ephraim with great anxiety.

'I was forced to tell him all about it.'

'You're not going to stop there all night agean?' Ephraim contemplated his solitariness with some alarm.

'Maybe I shall. There'll be a lot to see after—— Now then, don't go and act soft

now,' she added, sharply ; 'the doctor says there's nowt in it, and that's plenty for you.'

She would not be over-cordial with him. Still, with all his faults, she was a little anxious, he was so impetuous when in disgrace.

Iphis hurried back ; indeed there was much to do. There is much etiquette in these outlying places when such an event as a death occurs. The widow must sit bereft, in all the semblance of woe. Upon Iphis devolved, greater as was her genuine grief, the necessary superintendence. Her mind was full of the proprieties. It is among old-fashioned people that traditions are most closely followed. Iphis was imbued with such traditions.

The one who was present when the last breath was taken was considered the most proper person to fetch the certificate. Mrs. Cowlamb said little, but in that little Iphis quite understood that she must go. At the funeral the windows of the room where the

body had lain must be opened wide. It would have been a gross breach for any one to have closed them before the mourners returned.

When Iphis got back to the farm she could hear that the two women who were called in had arrived. They were taking off their bonnets, and talking all the while to Sarah. They were unconscious of Iphis's proximity.

'They'd buried her i' their way. I seen it times an' times, a bit o' muck in a bag under her arm, an' then they've a penny an' a bit o' candle.'

'Tcha!' exclaimed Sarah, contemptuously, 'such clat!'

'It's not clat to them, Mrs. Freeborough?'

'No.'

'She'd Mrs. Drypool's best nightgown on. It hadn't been washed o' seven year, an' was yellow wi' keeping, an' beautiful worked; an' we tied her legs wi' th' prettiest salmon-coloured silk ribbin——'

'Tied her legs?' cried Sarah, aghast.

'To be suer we did. Law, they come to see her i' crowds.'

'If I'd anybody died as belonged to me I wouldn't have a lot o' folks trapesing up to see 'em,' declared Sarah, careless of old custom.

'No? Ah, but the poor dead soul couldn't a rest else.'

Iphis passed through and slipped upstairs hurriedly,

'Why, she'd hear us,' said one woman, a little dismayed.

'Well, you said nowt amiss,' said Sarah, reassuringly.

'Well, we'd better be going up now, Mrs. Freeborough.'

Iphis went to look at her father once more; then she came down and went into the room to her mother and Tom. Her mother looked up with heavy-lidded eyes and drawn mouth. Her brother, with a reddening face, never looked up from the fire. Iphis found it a greater relief stirring about looking after

things, than sitting there with them. When either spoke it was only in monosyllables. Tom had apparently asked all his questions, and now was solacing himself with the brandy brought out of his father's room. His face showed Iphis what he was. Like Sam's, it was of a blue red.

Iphis went down to the town the following morning to see the doctor. He took her out of the surgery into his house, for he wished to speak to her privately. In the surgery were a few patients belonging to a sick-club, men suffering from severe spring colds, pleurisy, and such affections, their mouths tied up, and their expressions generally dolorous.

'There's some one stirring in this affair. You see it has caused some talk. I expect it is that officious fellow in Kilnwell Street. But I do not blame him so much; he is obliged to take things up to keep right with his superiors. Was there a struggle between your husband and Mr. Cowlamb?'

Iphis shook with fear, and her face turned of a deathly pallor.

'Tell me, tell me the truth. There was nothing in your father's illness to lead me to think otherwise than that he was suffering from prostration—a general breaking-up—hastened by unwise exposure. I said it would have been better for him had he allowed his business this last year or so to have troubled him less. My firm opinion is, that placing your father before the fire when he was perished was the great error. But of course that was done for the best. He ought to have had a warm bath.'

Iphis falteringly again submitted truthfully the occurrence.

'I knew it was a mischievous, foolish business. But it had best go on. There, do not be alarmed; my evidence will be quite sufficient. Now drink this glass of wine.'

Iphis was fain to return to her own home. In spite of the doctor's assurance, she regarded her husband as a doomed man. But

Ephraim had learned from Towse of the pass things had come to. Towse and Ephraim were in the kitchen, Towse acting the part of a consoler.

'We'll have a sup o' beer,' said Ephraim, 'if I can nobbut git the barrel to run. It's nearly out; we'll have another, though—if they don't hang me first.'

'They'll noan hang thee,' asserted Towse, confidently; 'th' owd man maliced me, an', lard! I niver fon out what it was for. The wife reckons she knows. I'm suer I sarved him fair. He was fair enow to me while he took agean me, an' I hadn't agoing to forgit him offering me hosses when I took to yon place. He was slithery as owt when he seed me here t'other day.'

'I remember,' said Ephraim off-handedly, as though Towse's sores were as nothing compared to his own insecurity. 'That lass,' commenced Ephraim, abruptly, 'says I kicked th' owd man—it 's lies; how could she see

when it was dark, an' another thing I was down an' all.'

'Maybe thou just did give him a dig,' suggested Towse carefully; 'thy faither was a good russler allus, an' thy grandfather would stand agean all comers. It comes like natur to onybody, when their faithers hes been good at russlin', or feightin', or swearin', or lyin'.'

'Ssh!' said Ephraim, 'here's Iphis!'

Ephraim tried to smile. It was somewhat forced, that Iphis could readily see. After her first glance she dare not look at him. She only stayed to fondle her babes and give a few directions. She seemed afraid of speaking to Ephraim. Probably she would have told him everything the doctor had said to her had not Towse been there.

After she had gone Ephraim moodily conveyed to Towse his impression that she too 'had taken agean him.'

'The owd fellow's been bad ever so long,' remarked Ephraim, to exculpate himself.

'It was a bad job,' returned Towse, feeling he must not buoy up Ephraim too much, or absolve him entirely. Towse drank off his jumbled beer, conscientiously feeling that when he was paid to work he ought to be at work.

Left to himself, Ephraim could not rest. He paced up and down before the house, and at last sought out Towse again for sympathy. But Towse, occupied with a cut-box, could only speak in a desultory way, never looking at him. Ephraim wandered aimlessly through the fields, next entered the stackyard, threading his way round this and that stack of corn. Sometimes he took up a fork and endeavoured to busy himself, then threw it aside, feeling a vague want of interest in anything. He entered the crewyard, foddered his few young beasts, and passing the box where his young horse ran loose, could not resist looking through the open bars of the slide window. The horse turned round, he felt its nose smelling his inserted fingers. He

could see its eye full of quick intelligence. It was fresh, and showed a desire to be out. Ephraim debated in his mind whether it would be seemly to take the animal out. It certainly needed exercise. He could follow the lane, he was not obliged to go to Moortown or Willowby. He could ride through a succession of turfy lanes for some miles. Willowby,—a bitter name to him. The scene of his hard apprenticeship. He believed he had more enemies in Willowby than in the whole wide world. How many there would be rejoicing at his ignominy! perhaps there the spark of rumour had been fanned into a blaze. At that hour, as it happened, good men and true were debating there whether Cowlamb's death was attributable to him or not. Iphis sent Sarah up to inform him. Ephraim received the intelligence with a sensation of fear and dismay. It was disgrace, deep disgrace; a verdict that would absolve him carried with it a stigma. He fancied every one would regard him guilty even if he

was cleared. Then he turned reckless; he would ride the horse and brave public opinion. He thought to himself lying in hiding would not help him. A bold face carried weight with it often enough. A breezy gallop would drive away his vapours perhaps. He took the long green lane, met not a soul in it, but at the end of it, after debating a moment, concluded to face Willowby, There he fancied stray villagers looked upon him critically, some coming to their doors to look after him. His mood was defiant, and his face clearly indexed the state of his temper. He passed the public-house where at that very moment the foreman was asserting himself. The coroner, after hearing Dr. Swan, alluded to the evil reports flying about — murmured something disconnectedly about it being a painful affair in a family of respectability. The foreman, a sensible man, took the coroner up.

'We'll have the witnesses. It's just what we have been brought here for. It's to the

family interest that everything should be cleared up.'

Ephraim was possessed with a determination not to leave the village until he had learned the result. He rode his horse at a walking pace, went as far as the carpenter's shop, where he entered into some desultory talk on the work he should want doing. It was all to kill time, and during his stay he could read what was passing in the carpenter's mind, and the contained voice and distant manner helped him in his conjecture.

Even the lads in the shop regarded him curiously, and his quondam friend, now a journeyman, gave him a distant, deferential nod. Ephraim was extremely bitter against them all in his mind, although his voice was smooth and his manner friendly.

Ephraim turned his horse, and walked up the village street again. The coroner's gig was being drawn out. The inquest was over. Just then Greenfield, the foreman, came out

of the public-house, and Ephraim stopped his horse.

'Now, then?' said Ephraim, inviting Greenfield's voice.

'Natteral causes.'

'Humph!' snorted Ephraim, 'a strange foist.'[1]

'Heigh, there was some nasty talk about.' Greenfield himself was a terrible gossip.

'A pack o' lies. It's made a difference to me, I lay, him going off. We niver did hit it ower well, but he wanted to see me afore he died. I'm suer, Greenfield, I was regular took aback at him going off so sudden, an' he wanted to tell me something, but his time was ower short. Wo, gra' face.'

'Well, if I was thou I'd git off home now. Things has all come reight. I spok' up; an' the doctor said it was a case as niver ought to ha' been browt. Now get off home,

[1] Stir.

my lad.' The look in Ephraim's face filled the worthy farmer with some apprehension.

'See here, Greenfield, if they'd had me there I'd ha' told iverything as did happen.'

'We all was of a mind,' said Greenfield, soothingly. 'The coroner, he's past his work, that's sartain; he wanted to have it all hushed up, as if there was summuts undernean. "Nay," says I, "we want no hushing up."'

'Somebody 'd been telling my missis's brother a paddy-noddy——'[1]

'Well, well, get thee home.'

'My missis is yonder,' said Ephraim, indicating Cowlamb's, thumb over shoulder; 'they don't want me there.'

'Well, I'd go home for all that,' persisted Greenfield.

'I think I will,' said Ephraim, in good faith.

But somehow, again to himself, Ephraim was despondent and miserable. Although the verdict was virtually an acquittal, he yet

[1] Pater-noster.

felt himself a leper. Folk would still think and talk. Iphis had looked at him as if she believed him morally guilty. She had come to give him fair warning of what was coming on, but it was as if she was only induced to do that by the tie which bound them. Go home! What was home?—four dreary walls and no welcoming face. Iphis?—in her mind would be the lasting impression that he had embittered the last years of her father's life; she would never forget that quarrel and its consequences. The old man might have rallied but for that shock.

When he reached the lane end he dallied, looked up. There was Cowlamb's great new house, all the blinds down. He remembered the old days when he was apprentice lad. Sometimes he had given Iphis a hint that at such an hour he would be passing the lane end. At that hour her figure stood on the heights, her petticoats fluttering in the breeze, her hand held high. How it had brought satisfaction to him, a smile into his face!

He would have to pass the house. He did not seem as if he could face the great, silent, veiled house. He braced himself, guided his horse, paused a moment again—his indecision scarcely lasted a moment. Giving his horse a sharp cut unjustly, he rode towards Moortown at a mad gallop.

CHAPTER 46.

TO LEAD A NEW LIFE.

It was afternoon. Iphis had obtained the certificate. The funeral arrangements were complete. Her brother was inquiring with tipsy *bonhomie* for her husband. He at last expressed a determination to go up to Iphis's house and seek Ephraim there. Tom had but scant knowledge of his sister's husband; he expressed himself anxious to cultivate Ephraim, now that all was declared slander.

It was plain to Iphis that her brother Tom made a practice of keeping a clear head —in the morning. He got through his business then without a hitch; in the afternoon he relaxed. She could not help her heart sinking. What a thousand pities it

was that he should have no more command over himself! What her father must have been in his early manhood, so were his sons. A giant of a man was Tom, thick-limbed and powerful, perhaps a somewhat bovine face, but in it a frank and manly if somewhat resolute expression. But he was not away half-an-hour, returning somewhat peevish and ill-natured. Her husband had taken his young horse out in the morning, and he had not been seen up there since.

'The fool's bolted!' muttered Iphis's brother, with some contempt and more stupidity.

Iphis was inclined to believe it so herself at the first glance, and she leaned against the wall for support. Her brother's sudden conclusion was startling and foolish. Then she saw the whole kernel of it. If she had but sent Tom up in the morning—and then she thought again Ephraim would perhaps have got it into his rash head that her brother had

gone up there to see that he did not get away.

The afternoon waned. The sun was a great disc sinking, a ruddy blaze over him and about him, sinking under a fiery-tipped canopy of flaky cloud. She began to feel herself growing anxious. Again and again she ran upstairs to a window commanding the lane, the turn of the road to Moortown. She could see the odd pedestrians toiling along, the ponderous waggons jolting with their heavy loads, traps passing or meeting them. Sometimes there was a horseman, and she was fain to hope that it was Ephraim. Too often hope ended in disappointment.

Her flights up and down the stairs disturbed even her lymphatic mother.

'Thou's strange an' unsattled,' complained Mrs. Cowlamb, impatiently; 'he'll noan happen nowt.'

'I wish he would come home. I don't like him being out wi' that young horse. I shall send somebody to open all the gates.'

Iphis went up again. She scanned the road. Some one was riding at a breakneck pace out of Moortown. Now on the foot-path, now on the opposite side of the road. The westering sun cast a watery light on the road. A glance behind her, and she caught sight of her father's glass on a chest of drawers. As she saw it her heart filled with the bitterest grief. As she took it up, it came to her indeed, 'the touch of a vanished hand?' Its mounting was tarnished; it was an antique thing of little value; it showed on its cylinders the mark of its late owner's fingers. As she held it, her mind carried her forward. Upon whom would she be able to lean now? Ah, she had lost her best friend in her father. Beforetime she had always felt that her anxiety was a thing which with a word would meet with dispersion. Her father was a kind of Cæsar unto whom she could appeal. In her mind was always the faith that he was always watching over her, and would never suffer things to go far

astray. Now a dread of the future encompassed her, there was nothing in it cheerful to contemplate. What could she expect from her brother, following in the wake of Sam? What from Ephraim? He would squander the money that fell to her share. In what way could a poor weak woman successfully contend with a foolish, wilful husband? She knew of no law to protect her and her children's inheritance. All this passed through her mind in a moment's space.

The glass was to her eye. The horse was wildly plunging as if endeavouring to unseat its rider, but still the horseman kept his seat using whip and spur freely. She had something of her father's temper, she approved of a man being master of his beast, but she detested unnecessary cruelty. It was clear to her now that it was her husband, and not in a condition to control a spirited animal. She felt the deep disgrace, her father unburied and Ephraim careering wildly home, mad with passion or besotted with drink.

She thought it just possible that some one in the detestable town had incensed him with an insinuation. How ready she was to find an excuse or an apology for him! She was thankful that he was coming home. It was not absolutely necessary that she should stay in the house another night; she would go home and prevent a repetition of such a day.

She held the glass half a moment longer; she could see her husband's head. Then there was a slight twist in the road and she lost him. A tree, an old-fashioned hedge hid him from view. Well, he was safe so far. She ran down stairs.

'Mother, I'm just going home. You can do wi'out me?'

'If thou wants to go, thou needn't stay,' returned her mother, aggrievedly.

'I just want to see if they're all right.' It was almost a supplication.

'Somebody's gone past at full gallop now. I wonder what sense there is galloping like that?'

'I shall soon be back if everything's all right.'

It was just growing dusk; she could see her way straight up to her little house. The road through the fields was in a true line with the lane. Her father's last field described a true right angle. She could see the road clearly, because the gates had all been thrown back. She could tell that there had been no cessation of speed right away; the fore hoofs of the horse cutting sharply into the close earth. She had not the faintest suspicion that anything was wrong until, passing through the last gate, something darted from behind a stack with the fear and nervousness of an antelope. The light was uncertain, she waited a moment in surprise, then she saw Ephraim's horse, head, ears, tail erect, scamper in and out, bursting into sudden mad gallops, checked at some obstacle to stare straight forward snorting, to set off into a wild gallop again. Then she thought that Ephraim had blundered off, and the horse had got away from him.

But there was no sign of Ephraim in or out of the house. She could see Towse in a pasture field—or some one whom she took to be Towse—but he was at some distance. He was carrying a lamb all legs, and a ewe was following him pathetically bleating.

'Towse!' shrieked Iphis, distractedly. But the ewe following the shepherd hindered her voice from reaching him. She ran towards him, and as soon as she had passed through the gate, he saw her coming, flying towards him.

'Towse!' she shouted again.

'Heigh,' cried he, not relinquishing the blear-eyed, long-suffering lamb.

'There's the young horse lowse in the stackyard. Ephraim's thrown——I know he is——'

'Nay,' ejaculated Towse, concernedly.

'The horse has got his saddle and bridle on.'

'I'll catch him if I can,' said Towse. 'I'll drive the beggar into the crew.'

'I must go down the lane, and see if he's hurt.'

'Nay, nay,' interposed the labourer's wife, appearing on the scene, 'come i' the house, come in. The hoss 'll take no hurt. I'll get one o' my lads to catch it. Go thou down, Towse, she hadn't fit——'

Mr. Towse, a man slow at times to grasp a hint, seemed to comprehend the woman, and, relinquishing his *protégée*, he set off at his best speed to discover what ill had happened to his most troublesome nephew.

'It's a good thing she didn't go,' said Towse an hour later. 'When I got down as far as the owd man's they were just a taking on him in on a sheep tray, an' he was all blood an' muck an' wi'out his hat, not fit to be seen. I thowt he was deead for sartain, he niver spok nor moved. They got him weshed, an' the doctor ud git there afore her, poor lass. They do seem a misfortunate lot.' Towse was greatly perturbed. Another catastrophe

closely following would only have seemed to him in the natural order of events.

'He'll not git to th' burying?' said the labourer's wife.

'I'd knaw; maybe one grave 'll hold 'em both.'

'Nay, suerly; an' they'd niver do to be buried together, they niver did agree.'

'I niver thowt he'd turn out sich an a creatur,' said Towse, with no great faith in his nephew'sultimate amendment.

'Ah, but Towse, maybe this'll be a warning to him—remember th' thief on th' cross.'

'Heigh, heigh, he consithered better ower late—somehow or other *he* took no notice o' warnings till he couldn't help hissen.'

. . . . . .

The house is quiet and peaceful. Poor Cowlamb has been laid in the churchyard at Snailhorn. Gerlimore, who served him so ill, has read the service over him with moist eyes. The odd parson had always a great regard for the blunt farmer; he now grieves that ever a

cloud passed between them. It was always an understood thing that Cowlamb should go back to Snailhorn. His first wife lay there. The ground lay waiting for him thirty years or more.

In a bed-room of the house lies Ephraim convalescent. His cheeks are pallid and thin, on his head a thin growth of hair in short curls. He has been as near at death's door as it was possible for a man to be. Iphis sits by his bedside contemplating him, thinking how pretty and delicate and submissive he looks. She, poor girl, is thin and worn also. She carries the mark of long suffering in her eyes and about her mouth. How long did he lie unconscious, her devotion almost compelling the favourable crisis? But she thinks so little of it all, for Ephraim's hand is clasping hers, and he is full of self-reproach and tenderness. A detachment of sparrows are busy chattering outside, perched along the spout. Sitting in conclave they may be, debating the stupidity of some one

among them. Spring is coming, all bickering must cease, it is impossible to live without harmony. Ephraim is silent, for he sees himself a great culprit. How much easier things would have gone had he learned to bear and forbear, had he shown less of the recklessness which galled the old man! Ephraim is in such a mood and condition as to see himself in the worst light. Doubtless, when health is firmly established, it may recur to him that nothing short of being immaculate could possibly have pleased the farmer, considering his introduction to him. He feels himself punished without a sentiment of rancour against any one. Iphis's share of her father's wealth cannot come to him. She has not even the power to yield it to him if so disposed. It is vested in trust for the children she may have. He can hold the little farm, but he has to pay the rent—find the money. There is to be no mercy for the defaulter. His old uncle's letter lies on the bed. He is to apply for Cowlamb's farm and he will

stand at his back—too late, a tenant has already been accepted. The admirable condition of the soil has tempted many applicants. It will be no satisfaction to him when he learns that Tom could not attend his father's funeral, but had to be left behind.

'You don't mind, then, Ephraim, that father left his money as he did?' asks Iphis, a little timorously.

'No,' he answered, 'it's best as it is.'

'I believe he would ha' altered things at the last. He wanted to see you, Ephraim, so bad—and then we were to tell you something, but he couldn't finish'—and tears came into Iphis's eyes.

'Iphis, I know what he wanted to tell me. He wanted to tell me—he'd think better o' me, if I'd promise to be good to thou. I hadn't been good, I been a sight o' trouble to you and to him; but I'll do better, Iphis. My poor lass, thou's hed a peck o' troubles ower one or t'other on us.'

Ephraim turns his head to the wall. He

is ashamed to make a promise. He has made promises before often enough. He is weak, and tears are not far away. But he is more and more strengthened and determined when he feels his wife's lips on his cheeks and her arm around him.

Is not life a tale of human weakness and penitence?

What is this that a woman sings to her babe as she rocks monotonously to and fro, the monotony by no means unendurable? She, as she sits, is a replica of Raphael's Madonna :—

A village lad to sarvice went,
And he was fair and comely;
His eyes were full o' sweet content,
And he was brant and homely.

Fra year to year he sarvice took,
And pleased the farmer rarely;
No lad had he whose winsome look
Had won his will so fairly.

The farmer had a likely lass,
And she was ripe and ruddy;
Right to his heart she did trespass,
Nor help but love her could he.

Till e'en his breast it had no rest,
He took no fessen-penny;
Far from her eyes t'will be th' best,
Than give her trouble any.

The farmer fain saw him depart,
To tempt him would no money;
The farmer cried: Then go, wo'start,[1]
Thou wast so good a johnny.

How could he know—in duty bound
The lad mun spurn his bounty,
That in his heart a deep, deep wound,
No sorer in the county.

The maiden's tears, they all did say,
He loves the farmer's dowter,
One word fra you and he wod stay,
For far 'bun him he's thowt her.

Then let him stay, the farmer cried,
The lad shall wed thee suerly;
And to his man he quickly hied,
And fessen'd him securely.

. . . . .

Look back o' years o' joy I can
Sin' he a courting sought her;
Thy faither, lass, the farming man,
And me the farmer's dowter.

---

[1] Worse start.

THE END.

Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London.

ILLUSTRATED EDITIONS

OF

POPULAR WORKS

Handsomely bound in cloth gilt, each volume containing Four Illustrations. Crown 8vo. 3*s*. 6*d*.

THE SMALL HOUSE AT ALLINGTON.
By ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

FRAMLEY PARSONAGE.
By ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

THE CLAVERINGS.
By ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

TRANSFORMATION: a Romance.
By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

ROMANTIC TALES.
By the Author of 'John Halifax, Gentleman.'

DOMESTIC STORIES.
By the Author of 'John Halifax, Gentleman.'

NO NAME.
By WILKIE COLLINS.

ARMADALE.
By WILKIE COLLINS.

AFTER DARK.
By WILKIE COLLINS.

MAUD TALBOT.
By HOLME LEE.

THE MOORS AND THE FENS.
By Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL.

WITHIN THE PRECINCTS.
By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CARITÀ.
By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

FOR PERCIVAL.
By MARGARET VELEY.

London: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 Waterloo Place.

MISS THACKERAY'S WORKS.

Uniform Edition; each Volume Illustrated with a Vignette Title-page drawn by ARTHUR HUGHES, and Engraved by J. COOPER.

Large crown 8vo. *6s.*

1. OLD KENSINGTON.
2. THE VILLAGE ON THE CLIFF
3. FIVE OLD FRIENDS AND A YOUNG PRINCE.
4. TO ESTHER: and other Sketches.
5. BLUEBEARD'S KEYS; and other Stories.
6. THE STORY OF ELIZABETH: TWO HOURS; FROM AN ISLAND.
7. TOILERS AND SPINSTERS; and other Essays.
8. MISS ANGEL; FULHAM LAWN.
9. MISS WILLIAMSON'S DIVAGATIONS.

ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF THE

LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

(CURRER BELL), AND HER SISTERS

EMILY and ANNE BRONTË

(ELLIS AND ACTON BELL).

In Seven Volumes, large crown 8vo. handsomely bound in cloth, price *5s.* per volume.

The descriptions in 'Jane Eyre' and the other fictions by Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters being mostly of actual places, the Publishers considered that Views are the most suitable Illustrations for the novels. They are indebted for a clue to the real names of the most interesting scenes to a friend of the Brontë family, who enabled the artist, Mr. G. M. Wimperis, to identify the places described. He made faithful sketches of them on the spot, and drew them on wood. It is hoped that these views will add fresh interest of the reading of the stories.

JANE EYRE. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË. With Five Illustrations.
SHIRLEY. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË. With Five Illustrations.
VILLETTE. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË. With Five Illustrations.
THE PROFESSOR AND POEMS. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË. With Poems by her Sisters and Father. With Five Illustrations.
WUTHERING HEIGHTS. By EMILY BRONTË. And AGNES GREY. By ANNE BRONTË. With a Preface and Biographical Notice of both Authors by CHARLOTTE BRONTË. With Five Illustrations.
The TENANT of WILDFELL HALL. By ANNE BRONTË. With Five Illustrations.
LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE By Mrs. GASKELL. With Seven Illustrations

*** *The volumes are also to be had in fcp. 8vo. limp cloth, price 2s. 6d. each.*

UNIFORM EDITION OF

MRS. GASKELL'S NOVELS AND TALES.

In Seven Volumes, each containing Four Illustrations.

Price 3s. 6d. each, bound in cloth; or in Sets of Seven Volumes, handsomely bound in half-morocco, price £2. 10s.

CONTENTS OF THE VOLUMES:

VOL. I. WIVES AND DAUGHTERS.
VOL. II. NORTH AND SOUTH.
VOL. III. SYLVIA'S LOVERS.
VOL. IV. CRANFORD.

Company Manners—The Well of Pen-Morpha—The Heart of John Middleton—Traits and Stories of the Huguenots—Six Weeks at Heppenheim—The Squire's Story—Libbie Marsh's Three Eras—Curious if True—The Moorland Cottage—The Sexton's Hero—Disappearances—Right at last—The Manchester Marriage—Lois the Witch—The Crooked Branch.

VOL. V. MARY BARTON.

Cousin Phillis—My French Master—The Old Nurse's Story—Bessy's Troubles at Home—Christmas Storms and Sunshine.

VOL. VI. RUTH.

The Grey Woman—Morton Hall—Mr. Harrison's Confessions—Hand and Heart.

VOL. VII. LIZZIELEIGH.

A Dark Night's Work—Round the Sofa—My Lady Ludlow—An Accursed Race—The Doom of the Griffiths—Half a Lifetime Ago—The Poor Clare—The Half-Brothers.

London: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 Waterloo Place.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 056534842